■ Sports

Nuggets shut down Spurs; Suns, Heat trample rivals

■ Entertainment/A22

Talent managers seek Unesco help against scandal TV

■ Across/A17

3 rebels killed in new clash in Bulacan

■ World/A10

50 dead in Japan train accident

Hu arriving tonight for 3-day state visit

By Christine D. Avendaño

CHINESE President Hu Jintao starts his three-day state visit to Manila today with a focus on subsidies that includes addressing Congress and witnessing the signing of three business agreements between the Philippines and China.

Hu, Macapagal-Arroyo and the rest of his

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Expert says patients at mercy of specialists

By Christine Esguerra

DOCTORS are not only leaving the country for greener pastures. They are also handing patients at the mercy of unregulated specialists.

There are so many doc-

Tuesday, April 26, 2005 ★ 36 pages / vol. 28 / no. 137

Meralco rates up by 22¢

NO TO ARMM POLLS

Fighters of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front assemble in the jungles of Barangay Kinebisi in Datu Odin Sinsuat town in Maguindanao as their leaders formally declare their rejection of the Aug. 8 elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The MILF has accused past and present officials of the ARMM of doing nothing to uplift the plight of the Moro people. (For more photos in Korea Pix Photos, Page A17.)

Per-kWh increase reflected in June bills

By Abigail L. Ho
Business

SOME four million customers of Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) will have to bear an additional charge of 21.22 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh) beginning June as the impact of the recently approved National Power Corp. (Napocor) rate increase is reflected on their monthly bills.

The average residential customer of Meralco, who consumes some 200 kWh of electricity a month, will have to shell out P42 to P44 more as a result of the rate increase.

The additional charge, to be reflected on the generation charge component of the Meralco bill, is less than half the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC)-approved rate adjustment for the Luzon grid of the state-owned Napocor.

The Meralco franchise area covers Metro Manila, Bulacan, Rizal and Cavite, and parts of Laguna, Batangas and Quezon.

Rationalizing differential, the new power rate increase is something the company has to go through to ensure that the economy would flourish.

"We have to bite the bullet to gain a better economic footing through ... the Napocor rate hike," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

At a press briefing, Bunye said Malacañang was "definitely not" insensitive to the plight of the people amid the high prices of basic

PHILIPPINE NEWS

Name Big 3 of 'jueteng,' solons urge whistle-blower

By Juliet Labog-Javellana, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Michaela Lim Ubac

LAWMAKERS want to know the identities of the three executives of a top sports-store affiliate known by their code names 101, 102 and 107 who are allegedly the biggest recipients of payoffs from "jueteng" operations in the country.

"I am calling for a Senate investigation to unmask the persons behind the code names 101, 102 and 107," Senate President Franklin Drilon said.

Drilon said he would file a resolution calling for an investigation of the beneficiaries of the illegal numbers game after the incomes reported from the television of the top government official had been raking in millions of pesos as protection money from jueteng operators.

Drilon said Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. had been calling for an inquiry into the alleged failure of the Philippine National Police and local officials to implement Republic Act No. 9287, the law enacted last year against jueteng, a P30-billion-a-year industry.

A ranking police official said 101, 102 and 107 were getting a total of P1 million a month from police officers in just one region in Luzon, outlining the take of the officers to P3 million. The P2.1mil from one on top of what the two received from operators of the illegal numbers game.

The business source said the relatives of the top government official were also

NATIONAL NEWS

PRESIDING Justice Roman Brawner heads "raliae" hearings in Baguio City.

CA presiding justice is Genuine Ifugao

By Vincent Cabreza
PEI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Many of the country's top court officials are probably relieved that Justice Roman Brawner, Court of Appeals presiding justice, won't be remaining for a third term at work.

Court of Appeals justices were both surprised and surprised when Brawner, 69, appeared in a red and black T-shirt, a large woven blanket and an Ifugao headdress at a other trivial feast that he was about the detainees on Thursday.

Brawner offered the rather as thanksgiving to the Caraballo gods he his appointment as Court of Appeals presiding justice, the first Ifugao appointed to the position.

Brawner reintroduced himself to the justices by explaining that his attire is worn by the Ambangan , the title for rich families of his tribe.

"I [grew up] in Ifugao, Ifugao, [and even had] my high school days. I am always ready to dance the Ifugao dance," he said.

Associate Justice Romeo Salinas Fernando said they were not aware of Brawner's heritage until that night.

"You [his lineage] was never a factor in his appointment. He's a good administrator," Fernando said.

Other justices, however, acknowledged that Brawner's indigenous Filipino background would remain a matter of the non-essential issues that have evidence effect on poverty.

Brawner's home province is Ifugao, home of the World Heritage-inscribed rice terraces and of the fourth poorest province in the Philippines, according to the Na-

CONTINUED A20

MOST of the 14 bullets that hit the car of Dr. Nicole Echiverri, ex-in-law of Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos, were aimed at the driver.

Doc's killing another tragedy in Abalos clan

By Ruben C. Tarobal Jr. and Luige A. del Puerto

THE DOCTOR had just left his house and was passing a street corner when at least three men raked his car with gunfire yesterday.

Wounded, Dr. Nicole Echiverri—ex-in-law of Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos—struggled to steer his Mitsubishi Lancer away. But the gunmen gave chase, firing repeatedly at the driver's side, wanting to make sure he would not live.

Hearing another doctor, Arsenio Abalos, elder brother of the Comelec chief, was entering home when four men carrying handguns strolled past his en-

CONTINUED A20

THE VICTIM'S mother-in-law, Rosita Abalos, weeps at the hospital upon learning of his death.

4 laborers probed on Ramos slay

By Luige B. del Puerto and Tonny V. Quismundo

POLICE said yesterday they would invite for questioning four laborers who had worked around the house of Assistant Secretary Raymundo Ramos two weeks before she was murdered in her bedroom last Sunday.

Quoting relatives, National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) chief Deputy Director General Avelino Razon said three had been an earlier attempt to rob the Ramos home.

That was why Ramos and her sister Leticia—who were also together and worked at the Department of Foreign Affairs—had the three outside their house exited less weeks ago, he said.

"We will invite for questioning a group of laborers who had worked to clean the house of their home," Razon said.

He said that while they were working on the fence, the laborers apparently got a chance to steal the property and see what the place looked like.

Police earlier said Ramos had been strangled on her bed but later investigators apparently did not support this.

Robbers forced into the Makati home of the Ramos sis-

CONTINUED A20

Top activist leaders now targets

SPECIAL REPORT

By Norman Bordadora
Chief of Reporters

TWO years ago, on April 21, human rights workers Eden Marcellana and Eddie Gumanao were shot dead by men who have since been linked by Bayanihan and other militant groups to then Col. Jovito Palparan, commander of the Army's 204th Infantry Brigade in Oriental Mindoro.

The deaths of Marcellana and Gumanao were among the severe violations of human rights recorded under the present administration after President Macapagal-Arroyo had a falling out with militants who had supported her during Edsa II and was alleg-

CONTINUED A20

side her candidacies in the 2004 national and local elections.

Palparan, who has since been promoted to major general and served as head of the Philippine contingent to Iraq, is again being linked to alleged political assassinations in his jurisdiction in Eastern Visayas. He is the commander of the Army's 8th Infantry Division based in Catbalogan, Samar.

NATIONAL NEWS

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TUESDAY, APRIL 26, 2005
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

SPOT INSPECTION
President Macapagal-Arroyo makes a surprise inspection at the licensing office of the Land Transportation Commission in Quezon City. The LTO marked its 91st anniversary yesterday.

POLLUTION HALL OF SHAME

8 companies receive 2005 'Lason' awards

By Dhinchet S. Rivera

IF YOU can't stop them, shame them.

This is the rationale behind the annual Lason (Poison) Awards which has become an effective way of compelling firms to comply with government standards for waste-water treatment. It started as a classic campaign for firms polluting the Pasig River, but beginning this year it included environmental despoilers throughout the country.

For 2005, the country's top polluters still came from Metro Manila, however. The prize for Barrio Fiesta restaurant in Mandaluyong City led this year's awardees for failing to install a waste-water treatment facility despite being reprimanded by the Pollution Adjudication Board (PAB), a quasi-judicial agency under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, nearly a decade ago.

3 in metropolis

Three more of the eight Lason awardees this year chosen by a network of environmentalists, along with the DENR, were also based in the metropolis.

These were Marco Feeders Development Corp. also in Mandaluyong, Steer Farms in Malabon City and Goldilocks Street Laundry in Valenzuela City.

"It's still Metro Manila. That's why all the rivers here are dead. Worse than even the city of awardees are from cities," PAB Pasig river-sector director Myrna Jimenez told the Inquirer on a phone interview.

Nabitex Textile II in Antipolo, Rizal, IPI Distillery Inc. in Negros Oriental, Jala Commarch Corp. in Davao City and Alloy Agro-Industrial Development Corp. in Albay rounded out this year's Lason awardees.

Pending cases

All the eight awardees have pending cases before the PAB. They will be closed down or penalized if they fail to comply with PAB directives for waste-water treatment within a year, Jimenez said.

This was the second time Barrio Fiesta was given a Lason award, Jimenez noted. The first time was in 1995.

"It has considerable violations and a history of noncompliance," Jimenez said.

The PAB issued a cease-and-desist order against the restaurant in August 1996 and again in November 2000 for its violations. Barrio Fiesta then diverted its waste water to a septic tank to be able to continue to operate, but Ilk Dey Network Philippines said.

Water samples

Water samples taken from the septic tank in July 2003 showed that its biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) level, which indicates the pollution load in waste water, was 1,190 milligrams per liter, way above the 50-mg/l standard.

Nabitex Textile had a BOD level of 464 mg/l, according to the latest water sampling done in February. It has failed to conform to the standard level since the PAB issued its first warning in January last year. Nabitex has been readying a cease and desist order against the firm.

Jala Cornstarch Corp. was the subject of complaints by the community surrounding its operations in Davao City. PAB regional officials discovered during an April 12 visit that the plant continues to discharge waste water despite a cease and desist order.

Alloy Agro-Industrial Development Corp.'s discharge of grease registered a rating of 9 mg/l, almost twice the 5-mg/l acceptable level.

Compliance

Among the first Lason awardees were Alaska, Blue Mart, Selecta, Asahi, Coca-Cola Bottling Corp. and Goldilocks Bakeshop. All of them improved their facilities after being cited.

Lason awardees who continue to pollute are Asahi, Selecta, Nabitex, Jesus Jereos or Star Mall, Savory restaurant and Universal Robina Corp., Jimenez said.

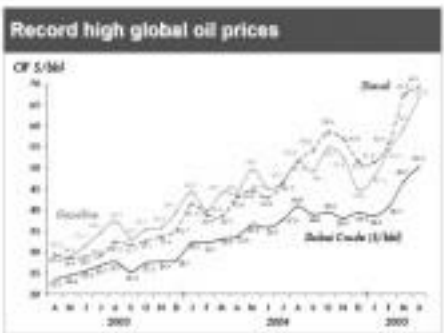
Lason awardees are chosen by a committee composed of representatives from Earth Day Network Phils., Communication Foundation for Asia, Pasig Pinoy, Greenpeace, Mingei and Bar of the Philippines, and DENR-attached agencies Laguna Lake Development Authority, Environmental Management Bureau, Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

SO THE PUBLIC MAY KNOW

Since the beginning of this year, so much has been said and written about the series of oil price hikes. Consumer Oil Price Watch (COPW) has been issuing misleading statements and accusing the oil companies of oligopoly, price overcharging and urging the Government to investigate the manner in which petroleum products pump prices are adjusted.

Please allow us to share with you the facts and our views on these issues:

➢ **"Arbitrary and too frequent increases in oil prices"** – The primary cause of increases in local petroleum products prices is not the deregulation of the oil industry but the persistent crude oil and finished product price increases in the world market, which have risen by as much as 30% since the start of the year and more than 100% since the start of 2003. All the countries in the world are reeling from the effects of continuing increase in prices.



➢ **"The oil industry is an oligopoly or a cartel as the timing and the amount of increases evidences this"** – the simple reason behind close timing of increases and very similar amounts is because the market is very competitive and the consumers are very price sensitive. If there is a 30 or 50-centavo price difference between service stations, motorists will flock to the station that gives them a cheaper price. This is also true for commercial accounts (large companies consuming petroleum products). Therefore, oil companies ensure that their prices are very competitive and that they adjust their prices quickly in line with the market movement. Dealers and customers (as well as media) normally advise oil companies if there is a competing oil player that has announced an adjustment in prices.

The final proof of the non-existence of an oligopoly or cartel is the financial performance of the oil companies. If there is a cartel or oligopoly, every oil company will be making money and will have attractive returns on their investment. A check with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) will show that the major oil companies have suffered losses in various periods of time and although profits were also generated, the investments are very large (about P 50bln for Shell) such that the Return on Rate Base (RORB) ranges only from 3-4%. How can this be a cartel/oligopoly then?

➢ **"Petron and Shell have refineries so they should not price their products the same as importers. They are overcharging the market."** – A refinery is a separate investment from depots and gas stations, which requires a fair return to ensure continued investment and operation. At the moment, the refining business is not attractive in the country. Proof of this is the closure in Oct of 2003 of a refinery in Batangas. Another proof is the absence of any investment in a refinery by any new oil player in the market despite the fact that local refineries can only supply 50% of the market's requirements so 50% of finished products are already imported. New players have only invested in storage facilities and gas stations.

So how can Petron and Shell price their products lower when their refineries are already not giving sufficient and appropriate return on investments? It is also like saying that it is OK to pay refineries outside the country a higher price and make them profitable but it is not OK to pay the same price to local companies and make their refineries profitable as well!

On the basis of the above clarifications, Shell is therefore of the view that **the manner of local oil price setting is not arbitrary and that the adjustments are not unjustified**, as it is primarily driven by global factors and movements in the exchange rate.

Shell welcomes the recent announcement by the Department of Energy (DOE) to review the Oil Deregulation Law and the various hearings conducted by the Senate and the House of Representatives on oil pricing. We believe these are relevant fora to discuss and clarify the issues and concerns about the oil industry, not the ad hoc press conferences organized by consumer advocate groups, which have inadequate information and insufficient understanding of the oil industry.

US Army general here for terror talks

With US Pacific command's logistics chief arrived in Manila yesterday for counter-terrorism talks with Filipino officials, the US embassy said.

US Army Brig. Gen. Jerome Lewis Bernier will review US-Philippine "military-to-military security-cooperation activities" including the Philippine military's procurement reform programs.

The visit is under the "regular series of meetings between military and security officials of both countries to discuss programs for sustained counter-terrorism capability," the embassy added.

The US government is helping train and equip the Philippine forces against al-Qaida-linked Muslim militants in Mindanao.

Small numbers of US special forces conduct troops on a regular basis as part of President George W. Bush's pledge to assist countries who backed the Washington-led global war on terror. AFP

Miriam OK after 'mild stroke'

By John Leroy Javellana

THE FIGHTY Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago suffered a "minor stroke" on Friday but she was now home and in good condition, recuperating in her family and staff.

"She's perfectly all right. [she's] strong as a bull," the senator's husband Theodore "Ted" Intengan Jr., presidential adviser on countryside infrastructure, told the Inquirer yesterday.

He said the senator returned home from a checkup at the Philippine Heart Center at 6 p.m. yesterday and was feeling better.

She was not confined but underwent a series of tests at the PHC's newest Friday and yesterday, according to Ortanez Lagunda, the senator's public relations officer.

Marilou Jiao, Santiago's longtime friend and social director, said the senator felt a numbness in her body on Friday.

"When she woke up, she felt numbness on her right side," Jiao said, adding that the senator's blood pressure also shot up.

Santiago called her doctor, Esperanza Cabral of the PHC, who immediately ordered an electrocardiogram and other tests.

Jiao said the senator suffered a "transient ischemic attack," or a mild stroke.

It was the first for the tough lady senator, who is turning 60 on June 15.

Jiao said Santiago was sent home Friday, but went back yesterday for a battery of tests.

"She was a little nervous but she's OK," Jiao said.

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Key witness vs Laoag mayor recants

By Armand N. Nocum

THE CHIEF witness in the killing of Laoag City Vice Mayor Jimmy Chua has recanted his earlier statements implicating Laoag City Mayor Michael Romualdez in the murder.

During a preliminary investigation at the Department of Justice conducted by Assistant Secretary Jose Ariel Bautista, Dr. de la Cuesta filed a fifth affidavit retracting National Bureau of Investigation agents of pressuring him to tag Romualdez as the killer.

On his fourth affidavit which was signed but backdated to October, Dr. de la Cuesta said he was pressured by NBI agents to tag Romualdez as the mastermind in the homicide case.

In three other statements issued right after the killing, Dr. de la Cuesta had said that two armed men—one of them a certain Boyet Abad—shot Chua outside the restaurant.

The armed men reportedly ganged up on customers, Dr. de la Cuesta said, adding that the NBI also promised to pay for the transfer of his family to a foreign country for their safety.

However, Dr. de la Cuesta opted to swear only to the veracity of his fifth affidavit, but not to his four previous statements.

He also admitted that he had been recording death threats since the killing.

Based on this development, Panfilo Lacson, Romualdez' lawyer, asked the DOJ to "dismiss the case outright if there is no witness."

Lacson said the DOJ panel should also look at the statements of Dr. de la Cuesta's wife, Dr. Lourdes Ann Ramos, and Dr. Jose Ramos, who were also at the restaurant when the shooting occurred.

"The NBI said they would not include me in the homicide case if I implicated Romualdez as the killer of Dra Hilaya Chua," Dr. de la Cuesta said, adding that the NBI also promised to pay for the transfer of his family to a foreign country for their safety.

However, Dr. de la Cuesta opted to swear only to the veracity of his fifth affidavit, but not to his four previous statements.

He also admitted that he had been recording death threats since the killing.

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Senate panel remains split; VAT bicam placed on hold

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

A DISAGREEMENT among senators led to the indefinite suspension of the bicameral conference committee on the value-added tax yesterday.

It was learned that four of the nine senators sitting in the bicam—just one vote short of a majority—were sticking to the Senate version retaining the VAT rate at 10 percent, running counterfoil.

Senators John Osmeña, Blanquita Villar, Jamby Madrigal and Serge Osmeña III could reportedly not have their way in the Senate version of a 10-percent VAT.

Anticipating the deadlock, Sen. Ralph Recto, chair of the Senate ways and means committee and the Senate bicam panel, postponed the bicameral conference to Monday. Arroyo is interviewed and members her allies in the Senate to vote for a 12-percent VAT.

"I don't expect a bicam committee but I would allow for political consideration, to let the President work on the Senate members to get 12 (percent) and no regrets to those that she needs more than the Pill (billion), that she's more interested in P300-P200 billion. The political consideration should take place right now," Recto said.

Speaking for part of Thursday figures, Recto said a 10-percent VAT with exemptions lifted would generate P66 billion, the proposed 11-percent compromise with the House version would raise P126 billion, and a 12-percent VAT, which the House voted for, would earn P136 billion.

Recto presented four options for consideration by the senators. Their original position of 10 percent with exemptions lifted, 11 percent compromise with the House version would raise P126 billion, and a 12-percent VAT, which the House voted for, would earn P136 billion.

Recto presented four options for consideration by the senators. Their original position of 10 percent with exemptions lifted, 11 percent compromise with the House version would raise P126 billion, and a 12-percent VAT which the House voted for

FILIPINO pilgrims wave the Philippine flag and hold up banner "Mabuhay and Papa" during the installation Mass of Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Sunday.

Pope happy for RP, says Noli

POPE Benedict XVI has expressed happiness for the Filipino role in leading Roman Catholicism in Asia, during a meeting with Vice President Noli de Castro at the Vatican on Sunday.

"I am happy that the Philippines remains the fortress of Catholicism in Asia and I am glad that Filipinos remain strong and firm in their faith in the Roman Catholic church," the vice president said quoting the Pope.

De Castro headed the Philippine delegation for the Pope's investiture at the Vatican City. He asked the Holy Father to "pray for the Philippines" and "strength for the Filipino family" during difficult times.

De Castro was received by the Pontiff before he officiated his first Mass in the St. Peter Square on Sunday morning.

De Castro described his meeting with the Pope as "very touching, encouraging and a humbling experience." Both him were Philippine ambassador to the Holy See Leonida Vera. Philippine Ambassador to Italy Philip Chedker and De Castro's daughter, Catherine.

Earlier, De Castro met with Cebu archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, Jose Cardinal Sanchez and other leaders of the Filipino community in Rome when he conveyed the message of President Macapagal-Arroyo to Pope Benedict XVI through the latter's secretary of state.

Cynthia D. Baldauaa

Aging population in Asia-Pacific to reach 1.2B in 2050, says UN

THE NUMBER of people aged 60 and over in Asia-Pacific is expected to hit 1.2 billion—a quarter of the region's population—by 2050, putting the pressure on governments to boost social welfare programs and minimize effects on their economies, the United Nations said in a survey released in Manila yesterday.

"The severity and complexity of such challenges will depend on the stage of economic development, the stage of aging and the level of preparedness," the U.N.'s Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific said in its 2005 report.

China, too

China, the world's most populous nation with nearly 1.3 billion people, is among the countries with the most rapidly aging populations, together with South Korea, Sri Lanka, and Kazakhstan, it said.

Developed economies whose populations grow at a rapid rate—meaning the number of people over 60 years will be greater than 20 percent of the population by 2050—include Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

Moderate rate

India, the world's second most populated nation, is aging at a moderate rate, with people 60 years and above expected to make up 20 percent to 21 percent of the total population by 2050. Aging in Malaysia, North Korea, Myanmar, Indonesia, Vietnam, Brunei, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan also is taking place at a moderate speed, the report said.

In Asia-Pacific countries with rapidly aging populations, the number of elderly women outpaces men, and the share of people aged 80 and over is seen rising from 11.7 percent of the world's total in 2000 to 61.5 percent by 2050.

Pension schemes

The survey urged countries to prepare by making pensionwise use of young labor forces and reforming pension schemes.

Pension reforms should include increasing privately managed and funded contribution schemes for savings and investments, increasing the retirement age and removing incentives for early retirement, and using health insurance to finance health care needs of the elderly, the report said.

Agreements to supply labor between nations also could help reduce unemployment in some countries while resulting in lost shortages in others, the report said. AP

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Doc's killing another . . .

Front page A1

Seeing the man slumped in the Lancer and his face covered with blood, Alados pulled him out, fatally hitting the man's head on the ground and was shocked: it was the surgeon Echiverri, his own son-in-law.

Echiverri, 43, died from four bullet wounds in the chest—the third high-profile killing to occur in Metro Manila in the last two weeks.

"I was stunned. I didn't know the man I had pulled out of the car was the husband of my daughter," said Alados, a former Muntinlupa City councilor.

Hours after the 7:45 a.m. ambush on Dan Rafael Street, Barangay Pleasantville, Mandaluyong, police said they had arrested one of the suspected executors.

Motive unknown

The man positively identified by a witness as one of the gunmen," National Capital Region Police Office Director Avelino Razon Jr. told the business.

Police also recovered the car-napped vehicle they had grabbed to flee the murder scene.

The motive for the assassination was not immediately clear.

"The killing of Echiverri was the second successive tragedy to hit the Alados clan, which is mourning the death of Rep. Benhur Abalos' eldest daughter from multiple organ failure last week.

Assassins wait

A eyewitness near the crime scene [name withheld] by the investigators said that, before the shooting, she saw two men standing in front of her store. Another man stood in front of a bakery just across the street.

The three looked as if they were waiting for someone, she said.

"I was stepping into [her store when] gunshots broke into the bakery. I looked out and saw the man [with] a towel. Razon said.

Echiverri was driving off but his car stopped after about a four-

The body of Dr. Nicolas Echiverri is brought to the Mandaluyong Medical Center from the scene of the ambush.

Rheagan said a witness had positively identified the suspect as one of the persons who killed Echiverri.

"Right now, we are confirming his identity and participation with other witnesses," he said.

Rheagan said the police wanted to be very sure that they had the right man before presenting him to the media.

One thing police seemed to be sure about: Razon said Echiverri's killing was not work-related.

Echiverri had a private clinic and also worked as a consultant for the Mandaluyong City Medical Center, where he was stabbed after he was shot.

High-profile killings revive gun ban drive

By Luige A. del Puerto

AFTER three high-profile killings in Metro Manila in just two weeks, will the government now see the wisdom of enforcing a total gun ban?

Analysts consider Randy Puchero raised the panic yesterday as he urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to immediately prohibit the carrying even of licensed firearms in public places.

Puchero called on Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao to "tell the President to enforce a total gun ban, with no exemptions."

Under such a ban, only military and policemen on duty would be allowed to carry guns in public.

"The President can do this even without legislation," Puchero said on the phone, shortly after a meeting of doctors was gunned down in Mandaluyong City.

"The President, in turn, must urge Congress to increase the penalty for illegal possession of a firearm to life imprisonment," said the longtime antigun advocate.

"It would take a unified international approach to start a culture of life. It would take all sectors of society to do this," Puchero said. "But now, I'm not in immediately done. Why not do this?

"Like I have said, why wait for somebody to get killed before we do this?"

Yesterday, three men ambushed and killed Dr. Nicolas Echiverri, son-in-law of former Mandaluyong City Councilor Dr. Arturito Alados.

On Sunday, three house breakers strangled Foreign Assistant Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano's mother-in-law in Makati City.

Two weeks ago, former Pasig City Rep. Henry Lanot was shot dead while having lunch in a restaurant.

Deputy Director General Avelino Razon, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office, insisted the motive in the rest was.

How safe?

"Very safe," Razon said, claiming that the enactment of certain should not be blamed on the police.

Neither would it be a district's fault if a patient died, he said.

Razon argued that the recent killings were not related and were just three incidents in a metropolis of 12 million residents.

He said police records showed that during the first quarter, the crime rate went down by 20 percent compared to the same period last year.

4 laborers probed on Ramos slay

Front page A1

ness on Sunday morning, and threw up, taped the mouth of Micia and shrouded her face with a towel, Razon said.

"She wasn't strangled. She died of suffocation," Razon said.

No forced entry

He quoted doctors as saying that they had found "a hesitation on her left cheek."

Apparently they pressed her face into the pillow," Razon said.

Investigators also saw no signs of forcible entry in the Ramos home. "We look was do not open[...] no door was forcibly opened," Razon said.

The killers took a bag, the contents of which had not yet been determined. But they spared only Gil not take any other valuable items from the house, the police official said.

Razon said fingerprints had been lifted from the crime scene and that Ramos' fingernails had also been scraped for samples, in case she had fought her attackers.

High-profile killings

The 2006 of any suspect police might argue later could be compared to what was taken from her fingernails, Razon said.

Ramos' younger sister, Leticia, was able to escape from the house and call police for help.

Ramos said the high-profile killings in Metro Manila during the last two weeks had been shocking and was related to each other.

He said the killing of Former Pasig City Rep. Henry Lanot, for one, was "politically motivated."

"[In] shooting of Dr. Nicolas] Echiverri has no overt motive," he said, referring to the head ambush of Echiverri in Mandaluyong City yesterday.

"The [Makati] incident was a robbery case," Razon said.

Nevertheless, investigators not discounted other angles in the former congressman's murder.

'Still in shock'

Ramos also died that no politicians had been linked to the Lanot murder and that there was no need to increase police security for the time being to shed light on the assassination.

The 61-year-old Leticia Ramos has yet to be interviewed by investigators who hope to rely on her first-hand account to learn more about what happened in the house.

"She is still in shock. But she will be invited for questioning because she is the one who could tell us what really happened. She is our principal witness," said Chief Supt. Wilfredo Garcia, Southern Police District director.

Dash to the hospital

Leticia reported the incident to police roughly two hours after three hooded men entered the house just as she opened the front door at around 5:30 a.m. on Sunday.

Leticia went to the hospital and gagged, after which she vomited food she had.

After fleeing from the house, Leticia rushed to the St. Claire's Medical Center, a few minutes from the Ramos residence.

Jessy Dumdilla, the hospital's admitting clerk who was on duty at the time, said a visibly shocked and distraught Leticia came rushing to the hospital on foot at around 7:20 a.m. on Sunday.

She still had packaging tape stuck to her neck, said Dumdilla.

Leticia, Dumdilla said, then used the hospital phone to report the burglary. Still shaken, she then went to the police detachment another few minutes away to seek help.

Ten minutes later, Leticia, escorted by police, returned to the house only to find that her elder sister was dead.

Police officers to determine what the robbers took from the Ramos residence.

Describing the crime scene, PNP Head Police Supt. Rodolfo Magbanua said that a few drawers and a shoulder bag in the slain diplomat's room were found open.

Pieces of evidence

Garcia said the police district's Scene of the Crime Operatives (Soco) had already begun processing physical evidence they recovered from the room.

The evidence included the washing rags that was wrapped around Leticia's face, the cloth used to gag the slain Ramos, and pieces of paper strewn on the floor of the latter's bedroom.

These pieces of evidence will be subjected to explosives testing and superglue examination, laboratory tests that would reveal fingerprints possibly left by the assailants.

Garcia said results of these forensic tests might come in two days.

Rodolfo said he hoped to get statements from a household who was known to have occasionally dropped by the Ramos residence to see Leticia, such as a DSS driver who drove for the Ramos sisters.

Police also drew at the Loyola Memorial Chapels in Guadalupe, Makati City, relatives, friends and colleagues of Ramos quietly grieved and wept.

There, relatives and said their closest co-workers gathered for a private wake.

"The family requested to have privacy ... our hope is to respect that," DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque told the business.

Ramos' cremation was to take in the Primary Columbaria, one of "the biggest of Loyola's 38 chapels, located on the third floor.

Repentance were barred from going up to the chapel.

Security personnel were told to let in only Ramos' relatives and friends, including officials and employees of the DFA.

Fresh from an official trip abroad, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo came to Loyola at 2 p.m. to pay his respects to Ramos, who had spent more than 30 years in the diplomatic service.

Ramos, 66, will be buried on Thursday in Rosario, Cavite, alongside her parents, according to the DFA.

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RELATIVES and friends of Assistant Foreign Secretary Alicia Ramos mourn her death at her wake at the Loyola Memorial Chapels in Guadalupe, Makati City

Top activist leaders now targets

From page A1

"[Pulparas] saw time and that members of the New People's Army are not the ones behind the communist movement. He said 98% rebels were just farmers and they know nothing," Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño said at a forum public hit-list at the University of the Philippines in Quezon City.

"He said the real leaders behind the revolution are the ones in the militant organizations, those who organize rallies. A few weeks after he said that Bonifacio Ilio[illegible] Dasco was killed," Casiño said.

Ambush

Dasco, the coordinator of the party-list group Bayan Muna in Eastern Visayas, was a human rights lawyer and active member of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines in Leyte. He was ambushed on March 14 in Tacloban City.

"Friends are saying that [Dasco] survived mental but while taking on the cause of human rights victims, only to be killed by hitlers under the administration," said Marie Hilao-Enriquez, secretary general of Karapatan and herself a victim of human rights violations during the martial law regime under President Marcos.

Investigation showed that Dasco had just come from a meeting of Bayan Muna and was on his way to buy milk for his child when he was shot in the back by motorcycle-riding gunmen.

"[The military is] now going bolder. They are now targeting regional leaders," Casiño said, expressing belief that nationwide rounds of gangs critical of the government would soon be the quarry of "special operations teams."

'Enemies of the state'

Fr. Calixto Bagbo, a Franciscan missionary assigned to Samar, said a crackdown on groups critical of the government and perceived as for "enemies of the state" was ongoing in the Visayas.

"When [General Palparan] assumed his post in Eastern Visayas, he promised to clear the area of rebels, criminals and [demonstrators] as he did in Mindoro. This time, he started by killing the lawyer who would defend the people when their rights are violated," Bagbo said.

Dasco was not the last Bayan Muna officer to be killed in Eastern Visayas. The Bayan Muna municipal coordinator in Matnog, Leyte, was killed on April 15.

Investigation showed that Alfredo Dura and his wife were about to board a vehicle when one of the suspects fired at them. Dura died. His wife was hit in both hands.

Like the killers of Dasco, the man who shot the Davao couple was riding a motorcycle.

Supporters of Lumiza workers

Executives and progressive party-list groups said the assassination of activists—now at an average of five a month—was not confined to either Gloriano Taguba or Justin's Palparas.

Tarlac City Councilor Abelardo Ludovic, who was elected in 2004 on the Bayan Muna, was killed on March 3 less than a kilometer from the headquarters of the military's Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) in Tarlac. He was shot in the head.

Ludovic was a staunch supporter of striking farm workers in Hacienda Luisita and a convenor of the fact-finding campaign supporting the families of the victims of the Lucisa "massacre" of Nov. 17, 2004. Seven workers and their supporters died when the military and police exercised their picket line.

In a briefing paper prepared by Nolcom, Ludovic was identified as a communist sympathizer. He also, [illegible], was tagged as an NPA member.

The documents said the Ludovics were close relatives of Communist Party of the Philippines spokesperson Gregorio Rosal.

Priest

Another outspoken critic of the Luisita strikers, Fr. William Tadena of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, was also gunned down on March 12. He had just finished celebrating Mass at a barangay chapel in La Paz town when he was shot by still unidentified assailants.

The deaths of sympathizers of striking workers at the hacienda had prompted the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines to ask the government to identify the perpetrators of what Karapatan and militant groups believe were political killings connected to the ongoing labor strife in Tarlac.

No one brought to justice

Another people's organization said that while military and police officials were being implicated in the killings, "not one has been brought to justice."

"The most notorious has even been promoted," said the group Bayaki, referring to Palparas.

Bayaki said "official military documents tagging militant organizations as a 'national security problem' further bolster suspicions that there is an official policy for the use of summary executions ... as political solutions."

The killings were happening even in places like Bukidnon, Tarlac and Pampanga, according to Karapatan.

Attempts on Capulong's life

Both Casiño and Enriquez took note of the close calls lawyer Romeo Capulong experienced[illegible] persons supposedly out to kill him right in Metro Manila.

"There had been attempts on his life three times already," Enriquez said.

Expert says patients at mercy of specialists

From page A1

tors specializing in cardiology and pulmonology were low are left as "general practitioners," according to Dr. Antonio Dans, a diplomate of the Philippine College of Physicians.

As a result, health care has become more costly because patients have to deal with, and pay, so many doctors, Dans said in an interview.

"Let's say you're confined," Dans said, "you can have 30 doctors in a time, each of them working on a specific organ or concern. That would be more costly because you have to pay each specialist."

In many cases, an internist or general practitioner could handle the job because of his "fund knowledge and approach," he said.

"In the first place, why do you need a cardiologist to manage hypertension?" asked Dans, who was a cardiologist for 30 years before shifting to internal or adult medicine five years ago.

There's more: "When a patient is managed by different specialists, Dans said, misdiagnosis was often poor and drainage[illegible]

Diagnostic possibilities are also limited because specialists understandably are masters only of their areas of specialization, he pointed out.

For instance, he said, a cardiologist examining a person suffering from chest pains would normally suspect a heart problem; a pulmonologist, a lung problem, and a gastroenterologist, heart burn.

An internist, in contrast, would use his broad knowledge to check what ails the patient and, in the process, save him the large amount he would otherwise pay a specialist, he said.

The United States recognized that they had a crisis when in 1994, only 32 percent of its doctors were generalists and the rest were specialists, according to a five-page paper by Dans proposing health care reform in adult medicine.

"In 1990, only 15 percent of fellows of the Philippine College of Physicians were generalists," Dans wrote. "In fact, there were more cardiologists and pulmonologists in the PCP than there were general internists. And yet this was not recognized as a crisis."

The PCP will tackle the problem during its 35th annual convention on May 3 to 6 at the Subic Shangri-La resort.

But who are internists a dying breed?

"There is the misconception that internists are intellectually inferior to specialists," he said. "The public, including their peers, somehow look down on them, thinking they're only generalists."

There's also the sad[illegible] notion that "internists" were similar to medical "interns" who render hospital services as part of the requirements for the board examination, he said.

Thus, "adult medicine" was now being used to help solve internal medicine's identity crisis, he said.

"We really have to educate the public to correct all these misconceptions," Dans said. "How I wish we can solve the drop-when doctors don't walk patients in a holistic way—where what they see is the person, not just the organ."

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Meralco rates up by 22 centavos

Front page A1

goods and services.

While the approved Napocor rate increase for Luzon totaled 48.90 centavos per kWh, customers of Meralco will not feel the full impact of the adjustment because the distribution utility gets only about 45 percent of its supply requirements from the state firm.

"Since our [independent power producers] or IPPs] have provisions for recovery of the increase, the impact will be mitigated," Jesama de la Peña, vice president and utility economics head of Meralco, said in a statement yesterday.

Apart from Napocor, Meralco gets its power supply from the San Miguel Sta. Rita and San Lorenzo plants of First Gas Power Corp. and from Quezon Power Philippines Ltd.

The ERC gave Napocor on April 22 an additional rate increase of 5 centavos per kWh effective today.

For Napocor customers, the additional charges will be reflected on their May bills. For end-users such as Meralco customers, the impact will be seen on their June bills.

The 5-centavos per kWh increase was on top of the 90-centavos per kWh provisional rate increase that the ERC gave Napocor in September last year. Meralco reflected the particular increase on its November bills.

Exchange rate adjustment

Aside from this additional rate increase, the ERC approved Napocor's petition to set adjustment mechanisms (SIMs) and incremental currency exchange rate adjustment (Iores) applicable to covering the last quarter of 2004.

The quarterly SIMR allows Napocor to recover rate fluctuations related to fuel and power purchased from IPPs.

The Iores, on the other hand, is a quarterly rate adjustment mechanism that allows Napocor to recover rate fluctuations in the rates it charges to customers.

Taking these three ERC-approved rate adjustments into consideration, the increase in Napocor's generation charge in the Luzon grid, which supplies Meralco operations, comes up to 46.90 centavos per kWh.

History of rate adjustments

When the ERC allowed Napocor to jack up its rates by an average of 90 centavos per kWh in September, the effect on the Luzon grid was placed at 91.23 per kWh.

In June last year, three months before the provisional rate increase was issued, the ERC also approved Napocor's third SIMR filing, which aimed to generation charge by 13.67 centavos per kWh.

A month before that, the state firm's basic filing was also approved, increasing Napocor rates by 17.27 centavos per kWh.

Other additional cost recovery adjustments that the ERC approved for Napocor at around the time the provisional increase was issued were 13.65 centavos per kWh for its decommissioning adjustments and 1.54 centavos per kWh for imbalance charges.

Total hike: P1.87/kWh

All these rate increases included in the P1.87-per-kWh Per Meralco, however, since it gets only between 33 and 61 percent of its supply from Napocor in May-October 2004, the net effect on its customers' monthly bills starting November was 35.07 centavos per kWh.

Also in November, Meralco implemented a 6-centavo-per-kWh reduction in its bills as it effected the second phase of the low-interest loan-to-equity conversion scheme removed its transmission charges.

Another rate adjustment that took place that month stemmed from the first phase of the removal of inter-class cross subsidies. This meant higher rates for residential customers and lower rates for commercial and industrial power users.

Because of the removal of the cross subsidy, residential and general service customers should record an increase of 20.52 centavos per kWh, small industrial users a hike of 46.62 centavos per kWh and government hospitals an adjustment of 43.56 centavos per kWh.

Large non-industrial and extra-large industrial service customers, on the other hand, enjoyed rate reductions of 27.83 centavos per kWh and 25.23 centavos per kWh, respectively.

Medium non-industrial service customers enjoyed a marginal rate reduction of 23.12 centavos per kWh, small non-industrial service users a rate decline of 12.46 centavos per kWh, large industrial service customers a monthly savings of 16.95 centavos per kWh and medium industrial service users a rate markdown of 3.57 centavos per kWh.

By February, Meralco again adjusted its rates by 0.29 centavos per kWh after the ERC approved the fourth GRAM filing for the first quarter of 2004. After this GRAM filing, the ERC ordered a return to the automatic monthly adjustment mechanism, effectively making the quarterly GRAM.

The following month, Meralco effected a 37.5 centavos per kWh reduction to its rates due to the higher dispatch levels of its IPPs.

The next rate adjustment for the Lopez-led firm would come in June, at 21 centavos to 22 centavos per kWh, to reflect the recently approved ERC rate adjustments for Napocor.

Other power distributors

Rates will be different for power distributors that get all their supply requirements from Napocor.

Unlike Meralco, most distribution utilities in the provinces, particularly the electric cooperatives, get all their power from the state firm.

In the Visayas and Mindanao grids, the approved rate adjustments, including Napocor's GRAM and Iores, amounted to 12.13 centavos per kWh and 27.99 centavos per kWh, respectively. The country's average is placed at 26.25 centavos per kWh.

Based on Napocor computations, households that use up to 50 kWh a month will be paying an additional monthly generation charge of P6.05, while those consuming up to 75 kWh a month will have to shell out an additional P19.24.

Consumers using 100 kWh a month will be paying P21.10, and those consuming 200 kWh will have to shoulder an additional P53.30 a month. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

Court . . .

Front page A1

cused Economic and Development Authority.

"The indigenous Filipino community] has big expectations from [Macapagal]. He earned a reputation in Baguio for being a very fair administrator and a good judge. But being [illegible], he is sensitive to the cultural manner of the indigenous Filipino and that is important for justice in the Philippines," said Rubilen Gloria, a member of the city's Municipal Board. Gloria, son of the late Cattle Breeders Association president Ruben Gloria, Sr.

"We would be interested to know [his opinion] on Igos [Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act] that legislators amended and then acted which also challenged before the Supreme Court . . . and is undergone people' rights advocates. The high court threw out the questions of law's constitutionality.

Fernando said this was the first culture she had attended and was delighted to learn about the elements of Cordillera justice.

Unifying the tribe

During the cotton, a black pig and two chickens were dragged to the center of the gathering to be sacrificed in the gods.

Baguio City Rep. Mauricio Domogan explained to the justices that a cotter, not only unified a tribe, it was a way for everybody to catch up with news about the community.

Domogan was a 13-sitting hearing the cases of his son Bagi with the aid of the cotter's high priest. The leader of the sacrificial animals and then he, too, danced with students of the St. Louis University and the Baguio troops.

Bugso dancing

Sheeran said his wife, Lorenza Ia, a retired University of the Philippines professor, later joined the dancing.

A few of the justices also participated, but many were content looking on Baguio vegetables, grilled chicken, pork and eat.

According to Domogan, justice is among among the Igorot, although few lawyers understand the intricacies of their cultural justice. Various advocates have clamored for the recognition of indigenous judicial practices in contemporary law.

'Bulol' in flight

Glimpses of Cordillera justice also surfaced during the burgeoned fair of the Philippines' 13th Congressional Convention for Lawyers this week.

The convention, which thousands attended, unveiled a new statue of Justice inspired by the Ifugao rice' in wooden two granary guardian depicted as a sitting man with his arms resting on his knees.

But the two-meter high 'bulol' was standing upright, revealing a clear face and breasts. Its arms carried the scales of justice, similar to the image of the lady of Justice.

Artists Kawayan de Guia and Francisco Rabaya designed the icon, which they described as similar to the "bulol in flight."

The 'bulol' has always been a "symbol of fertility, prosperity and harvest," but now that it bears the scales of justice, it also promotes tribes "as champion of the peasantry in state" and a "bridging of the old ways of indigenous tribes with today's laws," Sheeran said.

2 Pangasinan mayors lauded for fight vs 'jueteng'

By Yolanda Bataño-Fuertes
FOI Northern Luzon Bureau

LINGAYEN CITY—While Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz finds pain whenever Pangasinan is mentioned as one of the provinces where "jueteng" is rampant, he now has a reason to be proud as two Pangasinan mayors have been honored for their fight to stamp out the illegal numbers game.

Mayors Gabriel Navarro of Bolinao and Dominga Duenas of Burgos were cited last week at the annual Barangal Para sa Mamamayagal of the Bumalong Bayan Labas sa Jueteng (People's Crusade Against Jueteng).

Navarro and Duenas were also cited during last year's awards rites for keeping their towns jueteng-free.

"These are two noble local public officials who have the integrity and the courage to say 'No' to jueteng in their respective towns]. While there may be still pure elite jueteng in those places, it remains certain that they are worlds apart from the scandalous jueteng this corrupt and corrupting gambling in their jurisdictions," Cruz, Dumalo chair said.

Navarro said jueteng financiers or their representatives had stopped bothering him after he declared their offer of a share in their revenues during his first term in 1998.

"I have made inroads in his father, the late Rep. Mayor Marcelo Navarro, for introducing to him the value of avoiding involvement in illegal activities like jueteng.

"During his years from 1972 to 1986], there was no jueteng in Bani," Navarro said.

Cruz asked Navarro and Duenas to continue their fight against jueteng.

While Pangasinan has "many good people in power, places to visit and great historical events on record, all these attributes seem to be overshadowed by the [jueteng] menace of numbers gambling (in the province]," the bishop said.

"More than anybody, I am the one who personally feels much pain whenever Pangasinan is [mentioned in media reports] as a jueteng province," he said.

"The reason for this is obvious. I am the chair of the national crusade against jueteng. / [Also] in Dagupan City and the crusade was in fact born in Dagupan some three years ago," he added.

Cruz said 118 town mayors, 5 city mayors and 118 governors except the Barangal this year for their fight to stop jueteng.

"The vote message of the ready Barangal is plain and simple: Jueteng can be stopped by the mere will of public officials and police authorities," Cruz said. He explained that those were "more [than 100] members," he said.

Name Big 3 of 'jueteng,' solons urge whistle-blower

Front page A1

influencing the assignments of police officials in provinces with huge jueteng payoffs.

Rumors

Asked to comment on operations that 501 was Vice Governor Jose Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said, "We don't engage in rumors."

The young Arroyo refused to comment on whether members of the First Family were being offended to by the whistle-blowers.

"I don't think so because I have nothing to do with that. Our names are not being mentioned," he said.

"When I read the lyceums, it didn't come across my mind that Did] was referring to us. What was said was that those involved were close to a top government official," the Pampanga representative said.

Come out

He called on the whistle-blower to come out in the open and name names or "not can get to the bottom of this."

Belmonte said the allegations of corruption involving close relatives of a high-ranking government official should not be taken lightly.

"We should not forget that the very same charges caused the downfall of a former President. We must not underestimate the Filipino people's continued disdain for public corruption spawned by jueteng operations," he said.

Retired President Joseph Estrada was implicated and later convicted of Malacañang after Sen. Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada, his son, testified that he had been receiving payola from jueteng operators.

Admitting that the issue was affecting the President, Antipolo Rep. Romeo Jalosjos urged the whistle-blower to come out and prove his allegations.

"If it's true, they have better come out now. It's unfair, it affects badly on the President," Gonzales told Department of Justice reporters.

Reports of the whistle-blower should come out like Dingaan.

Lacson knows

Opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Estrada's former police chief, said he knew the jueteng payoffs were under control of the Philippine

High court fees trigger IBP 'revolt'

By Vincent Cabreza
With Members Lance Flavius

BAGUIO CITY—Defying their president, members of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines voted over the weekend to hound an urban challenge against what they deemed as "exorbitant court fees" imposed by the Supreme Court.

Lawyer Abdulaie Estrada, IBP Baguio chapter president and host of the 35th national convention of lawyers here, said most of 1,387 lawyers who attended the assembly resolved that the IBP officials to immediately file the protest before the high court should subpoena IBP president Jose Cada refuse to withdraw his demand.

Cada had withdrawn the lawyers' petition against Republic Act No. 9227, the law that increased judges' magnesium court revenues.

He said the government's fiscal crisis compelled him to save the judiciary instead because the high court might not be able to maintain judges in the provinces unless it raised court fees to reasonable levels.

Lawyer Leonardo de Vera, IBP executive vice president, questioned Cada's decision during the plenary session on Friday. De Vera was elected as the new IBP president but would assume the post in June.

De Vera and lawyers Carlos Medes of Mindanao and Dante Ilejo of Batangas were the only members of the IBP board of directors who opposed Cada's initiative to pull out a consolidated petition by IBP chapters before the SC questioning the constitutionality of RA 9227.

Supreme Court Associate Justice Reynato Puno on Sunday said the tribunal agreed to waive the increases for three types of court fees and issue that affect poor litigants.

"But the fees are still high. The IBP sees that getting justice has become very expensive. This [contrary] is what we marched for [in 2004]. Most of the 35 IBP chapters, including the Baguio chapter, filed individual petitions to get the fees lowered, but we did not know the board was negotiating [with the SC about the three compromise fees] on our behalf," Estrada and de Vera said.

They said IBP members wanted Cada to explain why they were not informed about the compromise. But, he said, "Cada decided to remain silent and in the back ground to avoid provoking a debate on the floor."

Estrada said the IBP is aware that the fiscal deficit has affected the judiciary.

"The ffd is still affected because it gets its legal aid fund from the Supreme Court [and with] lowering benefit from the court fee increases], the ffd simply went unnoticed. In RA 9227 contemplated the need to let the case take its natural course before the SC," he said.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, April 25, 2006
5th Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 5:34-42
Gospel: John 6:60-69

Jesus said to his disciples, "Peace be with you; I give you my peace. Not as the world gives peace do I give it to you. Do not be troubled; do not be afraid. You heard me say: 'I am going away, but I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

"I have told you this now before it takes place, so that when it does happen you may believe. It is very little what I may still tell you, for the ruler of this world is at hand, although there is nothing in me that he can claim. But see, the world must know that I love the Father and that I do what the Father has taught me to do. Come now let us go."

Commentary

Jesus knows his community before he goes out into the garden where he will be arrested and then murdered. He blesses them with Peace: "I give you my peace. Not as the world gives peace do I give it to you. Do not be troubled." This peace is strong enough to abide through injustice and evil, through violence and betrayal, even strange that death. Jesus knows them his peace has given riches his death—so that all might know how much he loves the Father and does only what his Father commands him. Come let us go—it is the invitation we are given—to walk with Jesus into the world, facing down evil with the peace of God deep within us, unsure in the certainty of Jesus' words and living. We are the influence of Jesus' resurrection. He we bring peace by our presence, our words, our dialogue, our facing of evil, our encounter with our hurts, our forgiveness, all for the love of our Father / Abuse—it is given. Now it is for us to give away (call the world)

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

LABOR LAW; LABOR RELATIONS; UNFAIR LABOR PRACTICES; TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT; ILLEGAL DISMISSAL—To constitute unfair labor practice, employee's dismissal need not be solely motivated by union activities. Several factors strongly give credence to the contention of respondents that the real reason behind the shutdown of the corporation was the formation of their union. More than, to constitute an unfair labor practice, the dismissal need not entirely and exclusively be motivated by the union's activities or affiliation. It is enough that the discrimination was a contributing factor. If the basic inquiry into the act of the employer is derived from the affiliation or activities of the union, the former's assignment of merely or reason, no matter how seemingly valid, is unavailing. Concededly, the determination to cease operations is a management prerogative that the State does not usually interfere in. Indeed, no business can be required to continue operating at a loss, simply to maintain the workers in employment. That would be a taking of property without due process of law. But where it is manifest that the closure is motivated not by a desire to avoid further losses, but to discourage the workers from organizing themselves into a union for more effective negotiations with management, the State is bound to intervene. (Citations omitted.) Justice Dangwalan, Third Division, Ma-Ao's Corporation v. Ma-Ao's Workers Union, PIME, G.R. No. 156292, January 11, 2006. By R.E. Vitto

The WORLD

Edito Lorenzo B. Ibanez

Japan's worst rail crash in 4 decades

AMAGASAKI, Japan—At least 58 people were killed and some 300 injured Monday when a commuter train derailed, sending a carriage heading into an apartment block in Japan's deadliest rail accident in four decades.

Authorities suspected that the train—with 23 people aboard—was speeding and failed to negotiate a curve. Downing four of the train's seven carriages from the tracks in Amagasaki, a working-class area between Osaka and Kobe.

The train, which was carrying some 580 passengers in the morning rush hour, appeared to be speeding as the driver was running late after he missed a station and had to back up to collect all passengers.

Eye witnesses of the crash expressed horror across the apartment building up to the third floor, with rescue crews racing to save through the mangled wreckage any survivors. Another carriage hit lifted out of the wreckage intact.

"We have confirmed the deaths of 58 males and 24 females. We are yet to identify the gender of one body," said a spokeswoman for the fire department in Amagasaki, some 600 kilometers of Tokyo.

He said 205 people were injured. Police put the injury toll at 504 people.

"Passengers who were standing were thrown around and passengers who were sitting were slammed onto the floor. It was just chaos," said Tatsuro Hara, an advertising company employee from Osaka, who was hospitalized for a leg injury.

"Some 10 people could not stand up and lay on the floor motionless. Female passengers were just screaming and crying," Hara said.

Relatives rushed between hospitals to look at lists for any clue as to whether their loved ones were dead or alive.

"My husband is still missing. I don't know what to say," said a sobbing Noriko Fukuzumi after checking the lists at Amagasaki Central Hospital. "We just celebrated his 40th birthday yesterday."

Japan has one of the world's most extensive and safest train networks, transporting some 80 million people—or nearly half the nation's population—each day.

It was the deadliest tragedy since 1963 when a freight train collided with a train in Yokohama near Tokyo and then was hit by two passenger trains from opposite directions. That accident killed 161 people.

"This is horrible and serious disaster," Transport Minister Kazuo Kitagawa said as he visited the scene Monday, ordering a "thorough investigation." AFP

RESCUE workers conduct rescue operations after a derailed commuter train smashed into an apartment building in Amagasaki, western Japan April 25, killing at least 58 people and injuring 300 others. AFP

Pope Benedict reaches out to other Christians, Muslims

VATICAN CITY—A day after making his debut as pope, Benedict XVI vowed to reach out to other Christians and to Jews in his installation Mass. Pope Benedict XVI met with members of the Muslim community on Monday, assuring them that the church wanted to continue building "bridges of friendship" that he said would foster peace in the world.

Benedict made the statements in a meeting with religious leaders who were also attending the installation ceremony, saying he was particularly grateful that members of the Muslim community were present. "I express my appreciation for the growth of dialogue between Muslims and Christians, both at the local and international level," he said.

He warned that the world is constantly marked by conflicts but said it longs for peace.

"Yet peace is also a duty to which all peoples must be committed, especially those who profess to belong to religious traditions," he said. "This effort is to some together and foster dialogue are a valuable contribution to building peace on solid foundations."

"It is therefore imperative to engage in authentic and sincere dialogue, built on respect for the dignity of every human person, created as 'in' Christian family believe, in the image and likeness of God," he said.

The Vatican didn't say which Muslim leaders attended the meeting, which was closed to the press.

"I assure you that the church wants to continue building bridges of friendship with the followers of all religions, in order to seek the true good of every person and of society as a whole," he said.

The meeting was significant because Benedict had left out any specific mention of Muslims in his inaugural homily, although he had directed a greeting to "believers and non-believers alike."

He specifically mentioned Jews, calling them his "brothers and sisters" who were joined with Catholics in a "shared spiritual heritage." He also reached out to other Christians, calling several times for full communion of Christians.

Benedict repeated that message on Monday, telling ecumenical leaders that he fully appreciated the need to work toward uniting Christians divided by schism and said the ecumenical presence at his installation was a good sign. AFP

US prison population rises again

WASHINGTON—The US penal system, the world's largest, maintained its steady growth in 2004, the Department of Justice reported on Sunday.

The latest official half-yearly figures found the nation's prison and jail population at 2,131,180 at the middle of last year, an increase of 2.3 percent over 2003.

The United States has incarcerated 726 people per 100,000 of its population, seven to 10 times as many as most other democracies. The rate for England is 141 per 100,000, for France 91 and for Japan 58.

The figures issued by the department's statistical unit showed that 12.6 percent of black males in their late 20s were behind bars. The comparable rate for Hispanic males was 5.6 percent and for whites 1.7 percent.

"Unless we promote alternatives to prison, the nation will continue to lead the world in imprisonment," said James Fyfe, a former New York police director of the Justice Policy Institute, a think-tank that studies prison issues.

According to the justice department, violent crime in the United States fell by over 10 percent from 1994 to 2003 and property crimes fell by 23 percent.

Yet the prison population has continued to climb, increasing an annual average of 2.3 percent since 1995, partly due to high recidivism. Within three years of their release, two of every three prisoners are back behind bars.

Criminologists attribute the growth in the prison population less to "get tough on crime" policies that have subjected hundreds of thousands of nonviolent drug and property offenders to long mandatory sentences. Reuters

Bolton nomination in trouble

WASHINGTON—John Bolton's controversial nomination for US ambassador to the United Nations appeared at risk Sunday as new allegations surfaced and a growing number of lawmakers expressed trouble.

The administration barely has time at the center of weeks of controversy over charges he bullied staff and tried to isolate intelligence that contradicted his policy views.

Even words of support from President George W. Bush have failed to end Bolton's problems.

A former veteran staff member accused Bolton of seeking to have a critic fired in the 1990s after a disagreement over US policy on rebel forces in developing nation. The Boston Globe reported Sunday.

Bolton also rejected advice from the US ambassador to South Korea in 2003 to tone down a speech condemning Pyongyang which it and almost scuppered the start of international talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program, Time magazine reported.

And the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which is voting Bolton, is examining allegations that he misused or leaked Bosnian intelligence against Syria, China and Iran, Newsweek magazine reported. AFP

TENS of thousands of people rise to cheer the main Reforma avenue in Mexico City during the "March of Silence" in support of Mexico City Mayor Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador April 24. AFP

Massive crowds back Mexico City mayor

MEXICO CITY—Hundreds of thousands of Mexicans took to the streets Sunday to support embattled Mexico City Mayor Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and protest a legal case that could prevent him from running in the 2006 presidential election.

Blaming politics for his legal troubles, Lopez Obrador defied prosecutors and led massive mixed (for by would turn) to work in Mexico City streets.

"Tomorrow (Monday) I return to work in my office," he told supporters jamming Mexico City's central plaza.

Lopez Obrador is one of Mexico's most popular politicians and is ranked by opinion polls ahead of the candidate supported by incumbent President Vicente Fox and by National Action Party (PAN) founder Manuel Gomez Morin.

Lopez Obrador was forced out of his job after Congress stripped his parliamentary immunity on April 7 to face prosecution for defying a court order when he condemned private land to build a public road.

The popular mayor claims the move was to stop him running in next year's presidential elections.

Supporters formed placards saying "Fighting for Hope," and "Lopez Obrador 2006." The march was also supported by lawmakers of the mayor's own Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD).

Mexico City's Zocalo plaza, with capacity for 100,000, was jammed. Power organizers said 1.1 million people jammed into the square's adjoining streets to join the "March of Silence." Federal officials however said that the crowds numbered 120,000.

Lopez Obrador had difficulty reaching the podium because of the crowds. Several other leaders of his party were unable to follow him to the front of the demonstration.

Politicians of Mexico's two main parties, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and PAN PRD voted to strip Lopez Obrador's immunity so that he could be prosecuted for disobeying the court order.

If prosecuted, under Mexican law Lopez Obrador cannot run for the presidency. AFP

Is it time to change B.C. and A.D. to reflect changing times?

By Michael Eserday

ALBANY, New York—In a world increasingly in resistance differences, B.C. and A.D. are increasingly finding themselves on the wrong end of the religious sensitivity meter.

Educators and historians say schools Saint Mark America to Australia have been changing the terms before Christ to Before Common Era and anno Domini (Latin for year of the Lord) to Common Era. In short, there's no love for the B.C.E. and C.E.

The change has stoked the ire of Christian conservatives and some religious leaders who view it as an affront on a social and political order that has been in place for centuries. Ironically, for more than a century Hebrew lessons have used B.C.E. and C.E., with C.E. sometimes referring to Christian era.

That begs the question: Can old and new coexist in harmony, or must one give way to the other before changing times and attitudes?

The terms B.C. and A.D. have clear Catholic roots. Dionysius Exiguus, an abbot in Rome, devised them as a way to determine the date for Easter for Pope St. John I. The terms were combined under the Gregorian Calendar, created in 1582 under Pope Gregory XIII.

Although most calendars are based on an epoch or person, B.C. and A.D. have always presented a particular problem for historians: There is no year zero. Critics say that's additional reason to replace the Christian-based terms.

"When Jews or Muslims have to put Christ in the middle of our calendar... that's difficult for us," said Steven M. Brown, dean of the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education at The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. "They are hard for non-Jews, because they assume a centrality of Jesus... It's not offensive, but it's not sensitive to any religious sensibilities."

The term seems very intrenched in academics in the 1990s in public elementary and high school classrooms.

"I started using B.C.E. when some of my students began asking more curiously than before just what B.C. meant," said Bill Iverdell, a history book editor, teaching in Smyrna and Brooklyn history teacher in the private, formerly religious St. Ann's School. Iverdell said most history teachers he knows use B.C.E. and C.E. "I realized the controversy was minor to remind."

He said the national Advanced Placement test in history has used the term for some time since 2003.

In New York, the terms are coming public classrooms through textbooks and standards, but B.C.E. and C.E. are not part of the state's official curriculum and there is no plan to delete the terms, said state Education Department spokesperson Jonathan Burman.

"The standard textbooks presently used in New York use the terms A.D. and B.C.," Burman said. Schools, however, may choose to use the new terms, although B.C. and A.D. will continue to be used in the state Regents exams, many of which are required for high school graduation. AP

New era for Lebanon as last Syrian troops leave

BEIRUT – The last Syrian troops were heading out of Lebanon on Monday after a 29-year military presence, a move being hailed by the Beirut press as the start of a new era.

A UN team is due in the region this week to verify the withdrawal, carried out in the face of international pressure following the killing of ex-premier Rafiq Hariri that plunged Lebanon into turmoil.

"A free future from now, and a new era will start in Lebanon," read the headline in the French-language Orient-Le Jour newspaper.

"Thirty years of Syrian presence will be over in a few hours," said the top-selling An-Nahar.

Syrian troops were seen bidding farewell to shopkeepers in the town of Anjar near the Masnaa border crossing and where the Syrian army and intelligence command in Lebanon has been based for decades.

Along the main highway leading to Masnaa, only a Syrian army checkpoint and intelligence post could be seen in the commercial town of Shtaura.

Most Syrian troops, but a token force scheduled to take the nation at a farewell ceremony in Faraiya, have now crossed the border.

Syria has been the main powerbroker in neighboring Lebanon since it first deployed troops there a year after the 1975-outbreak of the civil war, and further tightened its grip after the conflict ended in 1990.

International control extended through Lebanon's security services and its allies who tightly controlled political and economic life and were untouchable until recently.

Tuesday's ceremony is a military air base in the eastern town of Rayaq will be seen as the day UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is due to deliver his report on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559 on Lebanon.

The resolution, which was adopted in September, called for the pullout of all foreign forces from Lebanon, the end of foreign interference in its internal affairs and the disarming of militias.

"The UN team due to verify the Syrian withdrawal is expected to travel Tuesday to Damascus to meet with the Syrian army command and obtain the necessary reports, maps and documents," a diplomatic source said. AFP

War booty returned to Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia—The third and final piece of the Aksum obelisk was returned to Ethiopia from Italy on Monday as thousands cheered and celebrated the end of an almost 70-year dispute over a symbol of African civilization stolen by European troops as a war prize.

"This is the land of the Queen of Sheba and the obelisk belongs here," said Ethiopian President Girma Wolde-Giorgis, wiping tears of joy from his eyes. "I never thought I would be able to see it return."

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who watched as a massive cargo plane landed in the northern Ethiopian town and workers unloaded the 1,700-year-old piece of carved granite.

The 24-meter high funeral stone, or stele, had been taken in 1937 on the orders of fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.

The Italian government first promised to return the obelisk, which was erected in the Circus Maximus in central Rome, in 1947.

"I am very happy and relieved that at last the obelisk is back," Meles said after receiving the 60-ton top piece at the airport shortly after dawn. "I think this will bring about a major change of attitude in those countries that have treasures that do not belong to them."

The granite monument symbolizes the powerful Aksumite Kingdom, which was established between 300 and 100 B.C. and ruled the entire region that stretched across the Red Sea. When it was erected, the obelisk was in fragments, having been toppled during a 16th-century Muslim rebellion.

"Justice has been done," said Abuna Paulos, head of the 40 million-member Ethiopian Orthodox Church. "This was the right thing for Italy to do."

Ethiopia hopes to re-erect the three sections of the 160-ton monument in October. But concrete remains over whether the obelisk would collapse if erected on its original site, which archeologists describe as honeycombed with tombs.

Unease of politicians, religious leaders and elderly men who once fought against the brutal five-year Italian occupation of Ethiopia that ended in 1941 stood shoulder to shoulder at Aksum airport, to receive the monument.

Massive obelisks are among a few tangible remains of the past glory of Aksum, an area lying in the shadow of the Adwa Mountains where Emperor Menelik II defeated the Italians in 1896—the greatest modern victory of an African army over a European force.

Ethiopians now hope the return of the obelisk will pave the way for hundreds of priceless artifacts looted up in palaces and museums around the world to be handed back. One of the most valuable is one of two copies Ichiri Negast, known as the Glory of Kings, which is Ethiopia's holy book and is currently held in the British Museum.

Historian Richard Pankhurst said the obelisk is the most important of Ethiopia's stolen treasures to be returned.

"This will open a new era in the restoration of loot from the third world," he said.

Italians also hope the return of the treasure will draw a line under occupation of Ethiopia, where Italian troops used mustard gas against civilians and killed thousands.

"This marks a new chapter," Italian ambassador Guido Le Tel. la said. "This also marks an end to our colonial period." AP

ADEBE Aksumawhu stands Mon. 11, 2004 by the surviving Obelisk of Aksum, the twin of the one taken by Mussolini's troops in 1937 in Aksum. AP

Disney execs apply feng shui for HK park

WHEN building the new entrance to Hong Kong Disneyland, Walt Disney executives decided to shift the angle of the front gate by 11 degrees. They did so after consulting a feng shui specialist, who said the change would ensure prosperity for the park. Disney also put a bend in the walkway from the information to the gate, to make sure the flow of positive energy, or chi, did not slip past the entrance and out to the China Sea.

Heeding the advice of a feng shui consultant is one of many steps Disney executives have taken as the park re-tooled the local culture—and to make sure they do not repeat some mistakes of the past.

The financial stakes are high: International growth is a critical part of Disney's expansion efforts. Mainland China is expected to become one of the world's largest tourist destinations in the next 15 years, according to the World Tourism Organization.

Plans for Hong Kong Disneyland, Disney's 11th theme park and a replica of the original Disneyland, began in 1999 for the mothballed Lantau Island, a 30-minute train ride from downtown Hong Kong. Built on Penny's Bay and flanked by mountains, the park is a venture with the Hong Kong government and the first of the parks that Disney wants to build in China, including one in Shanghai.

Some of the dazzling visual effects and nods to cultural differences at Hong Kong Disneyland: one of the park's main ballrooms measures 800 square metres, because it is thought to be a number of fortune, said Wing Chan, who is the master planner of architecture and design at Walt Disney Imagineering.

In Chinese, the number four is considered bad luck so there are no fourth floor buttons in the elevators at the Hollywood Hotel or other hotels in the park.

Cash registers are close to corners or along walls, where earth placement is believed to increase prosperity.

And in the park's upscale restaurant, Crystal Lotus, Disney installed five feng shui elements—fire (artificial stone), wood, earth, metal and fire, which glows on a screen behind bottles in the bar.

After the mishaps at Euro Disney it is easy to understand why the company would take such pains. "I don't know anything about the intellectual and science foundings and what drawn," said Jay Rasulo, president of Disney's theme parks and resorts division. "But I certainly have learned that you need to respect people." New York Times/Alex Kuczynski

UKRAINE BEAUTY
Yuliya Pinchuk, 19, a student from Novomoskovsk, holds the crown after winning the Miss Ukraine 2005 Beauty Contest in Kiev, April 24. 36 girls from all regions of Ukraine took a part for the final of the contest who will then go on to fight for the "Miss World," "Miss Universe" and "Miss Europe" titles. AFP

Series of bomb attacks in Iraq kill at least 23

BAGHDAD—At least 23 people died and more than 90 were wounded in a series of bomb attacks near a mosque in Baghdad and outside a police academy in the north of the country, security officials said.

Amid the Sunday violence, kidnapped said a Pakistani hostage held for two weeks had been released, while controversial politician Ahmed Chalabi said delays in forming a government were playing into the hands of insurgents.

Two explosions late Sunday in a mixed Shiite-Sunni district of the Iraqi capital apparently targeted an area close to the Shiite Imam Musa al-Kazim mosque, killing 15 and wounding 50.

"A bomb exploded and, when people ran out near the mosque after the explosion, a car driven by a suicide bomber ploughed into them," an interior ministry official said.

Earlier, two suicide car bombs went off outside a police academy in Tikrit, killing at least seven people and wounding 19. Police commandos accounted for five of the dead, police and hospital sources said.

The mosque bombing was the latest in a series of attacks on Shiites, with a suicide car bomb exploding outside another Shiite mosque during weekly prayers on Friday, killing nine people and leaving 26 wounded.

The majority Shiites won control of parliament in Jan. 30 elections, while the Sunni Arab minority, which dominated the country of leaders of Saddam Hussein and all previous Iraqi governments, largely boycotted the poll.

The insurgency that has raged in Sunni areas since Saddam's ouster in 2003 has increasingly resorted to sectarian attacks.

Militants loyal to al-Qaida's Iraq frontman Abu Musab al-Zarqawi claimed responsibility for the main Tikrit attacks in an Internet statement. The statement's authenticity could not be verified, however.

In Islamabad, Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said that a kidnapped Pakistani Embassy employee was released Sunday and in good health, despite his two weeks in captivity.

"Malik Mohammad Javed has been released, he is hale and hearty," Aziz said during a live telecast. "We are thankful to the militants who helped in his release," the premier said, without naming any names.

Javed, 45, disappeared April 9 while he went for morning prayers at a Baghdad mosque. A previously unknown group calling itself the Omar bin Khattab group claimed responsibility for the kidnapping. AFP

WAQF women mourn their relatives who were killed in two bomb blasts in Baghdad's Muslim Shiite district of Sinaa April 25.

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SOGO

Entente tops agenda for US, Hanoi 30 years after war

HANOI—As Vietnam marks the 30th anniversary of its victory over US forces, it is expected to avoid any provocative noise about its former enemy as the two sides work to forge cooperation ties, analysts say.

Ten years ago, while marking two decades after the war, the former enemies got around to establishing diplomatic relations. In 2000, the communists were marked with another agreement by Vietnam on the poisoning ravages caused by Agent Orange, the defoliant used by US forces during the war.

But this year, Vietnam has no intention of invoking the war in sensitive terms. Hanoi-Washington ties are at their best yet.

"It has been very exciting for here," said Adam Sliwoff, executive director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hanoi.

"There are small hiccups every so often," Sliwoff said, "but a part of the maturity of the relations between two countries is for them to be able to disagree."

The most vociferous Vietnamese veterans, who had spoken of "fulfilling" in years for the most ties before the US invasion of Iraq, are expected to be muzzled this week.

"Some US-Vietnam relations are likely to irate anti-American rhetoric," said Carl Thayer, Vietnam specialist at the Johns Hopkins University in Washington.

"Vietnam also does not want to irritate the United States when it has so much to gain economically."

Gradually the scars from the war during which 58,000 Americans and three million Vietnamese were killed, are healing.

"Thirty years have passed since the end of the war. The time to open up a new chapter in the relationship between Vietnam and the United States," said Vietnamese foreign ministry spokesperson Le Dung.

Till the late 1980s, the main preoccupation in bilateral ties was the search for the bodies of Americans declared missing in action (MIAs). Today the two sides are focused on burgeoning trade ties.

Since the signing of their Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) in December 2000, two-way trade has rocketed from $1.5 billion in 2001 to $7 billion in 2004, according to the American Chamber of Commerce.

Moreover, Washington's approval is crucial for Hanoi's accession to the World Trade Organization. Vietnam hopes to join the body as soon as possible but is aware it still needs to make significant concessions.

The United States notably wants Vietnam to open up several sectors in foreign investment and to overhaul its judiciary.

Hanoi, analysts say, has no choice but to honor Washington.

"On the economic plane, Vietnam today greatly needs the United States because it is under pressure to maintain its rapid economic growth. It's undeniable," said a Vietnamese diplomat previously posted in Washington.

Economic issues are not the only blot on the landscape, however. Political problems mainly invoked by Washington also loom large.

Vietnam was classified by the US state department last year as one of the "countries of particular concern" in matters of religious freedom.

Highly active anti-Vietnam lobbies, including members of the Vietnamese diaspora, belatedly attack the communist regime for its hard line on dissent or repression against ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands. AFP

FLOWERS and a portrait of North Vietnamese soldier Duong Thi Nuoi mark her memorial grounds April 24, at a cemetery near Dong Lao, Vietnam. The memorial site is dedicated to 10 female soldiers, all unmarried and young, who were killed during intensive US bombing raids in the central Vietnam province in 1968.

ISSN 0116-2442 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Est. 2015: 127

OPINION

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Quixotic

INSTITUTO Cervantes celebrated the 4th centenary of the publication of "Don Quixote de la Mancha" with the first public non-stop reading of the novel in Asia from April 22 to 24. More than 500 Spanish speakers and students participated in the 50-hour, round-the-clock reading of "Don Quixote," which, after the Bible, is the world's most widely translated book.

EDITORIAL

It was a fitting celebration of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, the author, supreme innovator of Spanish literature, and of "Don Quixote," considered one of the greatest modern novels. By today's standards, "Don Quixote" would be considered a very long and boring novel by young readers with very short attention spans. But in its time, it was a bestseller and was such a sensational literary work that it invited imitation by one writer who tried to pass off his work as a sequel.

Cervantes established, through "Don Quixote," a model for the new literary form that later came to be known as the novel. Don Quixote tells two interrelated stories: (1) the story of a man who imagines himself to be a knight errant at a time when society had forgotten the age of chivalry, and (2) the story of the writing of Don Quixote's story. And through this device, Cervantes makes the reader think about the act of writing and the act of reading.

But the book has many more layers and dimensions. It has been said that it appeals to man's seven ages: from the time he is a child at grade school to his doings when he is just waiting for the call of the Grim Reaper. It is a work of art with as many aspects and bases for reflection as it has readers and students to peek into. In Chapter XX of Part II, for instance, no one could have equaled the simple-minded and noble Sancho Panza to speak with such depth on the subject of death. Everyone will discover something new at every reading of "Don Quixote."

Many languages, English among them, have borrowed the term Quixotic to describe a person inspired by lofty but impractical ideals. How many—or how few—are brand people who would change their society or the world described as quixotic? And yet this may be a simplistic view of "Don Quixote," for in Part II of the novel, the idealistic Don Quixote becomes more and more like the realistic and practical Sancho Panza, and vice versa. This was called by Spanish critic Salvador de Madariaga the Sanchification of Don Quixote and the Quixotization of Sancho Panza.

The Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, in his book "The Tragic Sense of Life," and Don Quixote's philosophy cannot strictly be called idealism because he did not fight for ideas. "It was of the spiritual order, he fought for the spirit," De Unamuno said. And he also fought "for Dulcinea, for glory, for life, for survival."

De Unamuno said Don Quixote bequeathed to Ruben Dario concept of Quixotismo "a whole method, a whole epistemology, a whole esthetic, a whole ethics—above all, a whole religion—that is to say a whole economy of things external and things divine, a whole hope in what is ostensibly absurd."

In Part II of the novel, Don Quixote dies (it is said that Cervantes killed him off to prevent other writers from writing imitation sequels) but he still lives among us in thought and in spirit. De Unamuno said that the new mission of Don Quixote today, in this world, is "to cry aloud, to cry aloud in the wilderness, that though men hear not, the wilderness hears, and one day it will be transformed into a cornfield or forest. ..."

There have been a few among us who have been called quixotic for espousing what others call "crazy" or "impractical" ideas. One of the more prominent among them is Nanoy Pacheco who dared propose the idea of a Gonzalez Society to a country that is steeped in a gun culture. But gradually his idea is gaining acceptance as a solution to the unabated violence and killings in our country.

Quixotic need not mean impractical or crazy idealism. In this age of cynicism and materialism, we need to take up again the cause of Don Quixote, as seen by De Unamuno: to fight for our ideals and principles, to fight for life, for survival, for glory.

In Edmond Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac," the Comte de Guiche reminds Cyrano of Don Quixote's tilting with the windmills. De Guiche tells Cyrano: "Windmills, if you remember, can fling you down to the mud." And Cyrano replies: "Or lift you up among the stars."

Especially in our depressed, pessimistic, dejected nation, we need a touch of the quixotic thinking and spirit. While remaining practical Sancho Panzas, for we have to eat and earn a living, we can still dream, embark on a quest and try to reach for the stars.

Shattering Makiling's 'gem' status

VIEWPOINT

Jean L. Mercado

"THEY'VE 'gone' of forest management in a regimen manner for examples of positive resource stewardship," says Patrick David of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

The FAO senior regional forestry officer was referring to, among other things, four successive Philippine presidents, among them Marcos, who declared the summit's 28 sectors for plant diversity today. Botanical gardens, the National Arts Center and even the Bicol Mariz Mariling resorts that it ranks among 32 key eco-tourism sites.

Thus, FAO included Makiling's rehabilitation, with 27 other case studies in its new 404-page book, "In Search Of Excellence: Exemplars from Management in Asia and the Pacific." The materials for the book were culled from 172 reports submitted by 23 countries.

But Mariden's Rep. Gil E. de Guzman may not concur. Makiling's "gem" status. To do that, he argued this, congressional watchdog has to "protect it from the encroachment of the forces of the Philippines for periodic camping and jamborees.

"This will well fragment Makiling's ecological ecosystem, trigger loss of habitat and destruction of natural resources," Discussion of the Philippines Los Baños chancellor Wilfredo David warned.

Thus, legislators rounded down similar deep-sleep disasters: Mount Iloh 150,000 and 2441 and Mount Apo 1,000 to 3,000. The Mariden's measure bill may slip through. In Congress, stranger things have happened.

The measure would fetch decades of conservation and preservation efforts down the tube, Dr. Cristina Eufemio, Department of Environment and Natural Resources undersecretary, told the Inquirer. "And we'll have a stranded Mt. Makiling," the UP-trained scientist.

Makiling once resembled other rugged ever-green mountains, a semi-arid stretch blanketed by sturdy sugar grass. Trees were raised and, as fuel wood and charcoal, barged across Laguna de Bay to Manila.

Custodians of Mariz Makiling," the late Wildened Scientist Clemente Umali said in a National Academy of Science and Technology address. This enabled the seeds of golden Mariz Makiling who returned to the peak as people cleared her gifts. The former DENR chairman called for a reversal of the ecological plunder.

"In 1880, the Spanish engineer Enrique Abella described the Candaraza River in Bay Laguna, as one of the most important rivers in Makiling," Umali recalled. "This river has disappeared."

The "forest" would find quiet satisfaction in DAD's analysis, written by UP's Juan Dolino and Merlinda Tapia: "Any ill efforts to conserve and protect Mt. Makiling have been successful." But the reserve "has been fragmented and impaired, due to the encroachment of its managers and participation of various stakeholders."

Within the reserve today are over 2,000 species of plants, 300 species of birds, and 100 species of mammals, 140 species of reptiles and 22 amphibians. "Many are still left to be discovered and identified."

But the shocks the forest could record in damaging their loved habitats—the stray shot or de Guzman's silver plover.

Lamenting wildlife habitats are considered, the FAO also spreads over persons of backwaters and highland areas of the forest stocks wounded. It also surrounded forest and plantation areas.

Three watersheds under water for Columbia City, Los Baños and Bay in Laguna plus Barangays Timugan and Tuntungan in Batangas. They also serve farms, aquaculture ponds and industrial parks.

But the DOF body allowed squatters—17 in 1990 increasing to 45 in 2004—to invade the area, in Isaac's eternal words, despite a court order. Instead, it built illegal permanent structures.

"DOF's performance in controlling forest occupancy results in ineffectiveness and inefficiency as a forest manager," UP noted. DOF never claimed "it has the expertise or manpower or resources to control it."

DP does. And it's points of investing all watersheds. Local officials to local governments, except over the dams and enabled water to regenerate. "We have the track record," David says.

Columbia, Los Baños, Bay and Sta. Rosa as well as Metro Manila and nearby metro have directly benefited from Makiling's multiple roles. It's a lung for surrounding areas and a "huge sink absorbing pollutants and carbon." The reserve makes possible Indio's geothermal power plant. The forest also block catastrophic landslides that ravaged Leyte, Baroda and Quezon.

Above all, Makiling is a training laboratory. It shows faculty members, researchers and students from abroad and colleges from all over: Cagayan Valley, Cavalleros, Ilocos, Bicol, Samar and Leyte.

Scientists regard Makiling as "one of the best botanical biological areas in the Philippines," David explains, adding that DKS is only the home of international bodies to recognize that record.

Thirty-two are among God-given capacity to regenerate it. "Their ability to hold a UP graduating class just before his death. "The rain and others are most except many by nature's fragrances, once the kind of man it is no longer found against her."

That's the forest Makiling's "gem" offers. The "treasured forest" urges de Guzman and his parliamentary colleagues "their raised hands."

E-mail: jean_mercado@pacific.net.ph

Step backward

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE CHOICE of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as the new pope wasn't a surprise, but it still disappointed. It reminded us that Karol Wojtyla, Ratzinger's predecessor, was pretty much a Nazi. The Catholic Church remains a bastion of conservatism, with occasional outbreaks of liberalism. Like John Paul II, the new Pope Benedict XVI is a neo-liberal, the second time it's happened in the last half millennium. Unlike John Paul II, Benedict XVI is unmistakable: the former head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, the direct descendant of the Inquisition. Like John Paul II, he has viewed as slave lunatic as other faiths, notably the Jewish faith. Unlike John Paul II, he has viewed as a personal debt not just as a latent duty Inquisition but as a former member of the Hitler Youth.

I was half-hoping a miracle would happen, and Oscar Andres Rodriguez Maradiaga, archbishop of Honduras and head of the Federation of Latin American Bishops, would seize from Peter's cheek. Like John Paul II, he has been a beacon of ecumenism and a harsh critic of the kind of globalization portrayed by the World Trade Organization, which has taken its toll on the Latin American poor. Truth is, he too said, "still have to do the agenda for the 21st century in all the countries of Latin America. Many times justice comes only for people who are rich. The poor have no rights to have justice."

A pope would have made a perfect counterpoint to John Paul II, combating his views on the world, enlarging the scope of peace and humanity with the embracing force of social justice. Alas, he never had a chance, the cardinals preferring to take several steps backward after John Paul II had taken a giant stride forward. Well, I've been so informed that papal elections were suffused by divine guidance or infallible wisdom. They're pretty much governed by human frailty and political battle.

Many conservatives have said the choice of Ratzinger, a great antagonist of the theological direction of the Latin American clergy, is meant to address the Church's growing alienation over the spread of Islam in the world. It's the same reason growing religion in Europe). But I don't know if the spread of Islam can be checked with renewed emphasis on dogma, or keep the faithful faithful, accompanied by aggressive proselytizing to increase their ranks. Instead, I don't think it does any good to have Ratzinger's choice, if it will make the world a lesser place to live in.

It's not just the growing migrant population of Europe that is giving Islam renewed energy. It is also a widespread perception that the Christianity is the oppressor's religion and Islam that of the oppressed. It's an idea that will outlast the 21st century caught in the juxtaposition of the black community in the United States, warring many of its prominent figures, chief of them Jackson, into Muslims. Also see Negro, the great Muhammad Ali was once again a Muslim. Cassius Clay and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was less dramatic. They formed their "slave names" along with their religion and embraced Islam for their racial liberation as much as for their personal salvation.

Converging economics to the back burner—a notion Ratzinger poses incriminating his termination to a "genuine dialogue" with others—will be a step backward. Pope John Paul II gave Catholicism a good name by being many things, by championing religious and peripheral and exclusivity, and dwelling beyond its the common human striving for goodness and nobility wherever they appeared in the hearts of Christian or Muslim, believer or non-believer. He didn't just say he wanted dialogue, he manifested it in other books, saying explicitly their followers were welcomed by heaven too. He showed that morality didn't lie in being pious, it lay in being decent. He showed that being saved didn't lie in what one believed, it lay in how one lived.

Choosing the spread of Islam in Europe means with a far more negative connotation that it will mean check the spread of Islamism, Islam being the fundamentalist of it. That is Islam. The problem does not lie in Islam, it lies in fundamentalism, which is a problem not just of Islam but of Christianity as well. John Paul II had great success in opposing the dire assumption of Huntington's thesis that has been raised as an issue in Christ over the last two millennia. You are apt to find just as many activists among fundamentalist Christians as among fundamentalist Muslims. Just look at the Bush-Ratzinger's choice. When Hamas is standing with them. Same sentiment is as much an obscenity as the Sept. 11 surprise was. Invading a country on the belief that God commands it is just as obscene as invading two towns on the belief that Allah commands it.

John Paul II did spend his papacy trying to point out that if there is a difference in that world, it is not between Christian and Muslim, believer and non-believer, it is between fanatic and reasonable, doctrinaire and life-affirming. It is between those who believe that human beings are bound by a common plight and destiny and those who believe that those who are not for them are against them. It is between those who believe the world could be made safe only homogeneity and uniformity, especially under the hegemonic rule of one superpower, it is between those who believe that life is precious and that world be molded like the plaque and those who believe that God imperatively commands the observation of infidels, the child being clutched by her mother during a bombing run being flesh and blood anyway but heavenly spirit.

The new Pope wants to check the spread of anything, he should check the spread of the worship of the modern day Baal, the god of quick and great.

Reassuring

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cassayan

THE FAQ HHH addressed last Sunday continued speculation that the head count was extended by police earlier to a 25-year-old Chinese in the very crowded Tiananmen Square in the heart of Beijing may have been the "unexpected consequence" of the new Japanese premier stomping China in the past few weeks. Tommasso Rodrigo and his daughter Regine (the very part of a group of FIL guys women, when they were suddenly involved in a "Chinese incident" when they were stopped by traffic cops written an hour they were both cited. Rodrigo's wife Divina was also there but reports on the incident have not changed, although she has to remain for a while in Beijing longer to accompany Vice Ayo-chairman's newspapers, friend Gail.

• • •

The drivers that's it would have been an anti-Japanese sentiment than triggered the incident. Apparently from the time the Filipino drivers looked like Japanese, with their fair complexion and their eyes. The editorial noted the assailant's way of commercial travel, friends of the Rodrigos, by Sarah Balabagan's case. Apparently the assailant was very well versed in the use of that weapon. They also say the attack happened so swiftly that the two of the nice guys were already on the ground, and if she stones collapsed on the pavement.

• • •

The present of Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Chinese President Hu Jintao in Beijing may finally to ease other ties before the start of the demolition leaders' gathering in Jakarta but words are quite reassuring. Whether the strain in relations between the two countries would be long-term remains unsure of closing the war years could be extended remains to be seen, but for the moment, my reassurance that it would not worsen and nevertheless is good enough. His former is visiting Manila this month, and as the editorial said, he can expect hard questions from the local media about his ex-girl in Tiananmen Square.

• • •

Yesterday I wrote about the miracle produced by Sen. Pimentel for the Speaker's wife, Gina de Venecia. Seeing a title to the debate of this same same heroism of the recent events in Rome, perhaps it's order not to bring to the readers' attention a book that was reprinted last December 2000 in time for the Eucharistic Marian Year proclamation of the late Pope John Paul II. The book, "Cry Beloved Mother" Charvis, Inc. paper," which was first printed on the Feast of Pentecost in 1987, was written by former CIA bureaucrats professor Josefina B. Constantino and Dr. Carmelo Arre, who taught at Columbia University and took a humanities course at the Ateneo because his interest of lack. Archdeacon Constantino first met Isabela of her life as a layperson, professed and consecrated to the great love 6 years, she had consolidated as St. Teresa Joseph Patrick of the Carmelites.

• • •

In Teresa symbolically says that her book, written under her pen name, because it is "devoid for laymen and laywomen," not for scholars and theologians. It chronicles her spiritual odyssey, her "journey of faith, hope and love" from a layperson engaged in the world to a nun totally consecrated entirely to the Lord and servant to the Church by land country walls. Above all, it's expressed more than of her love for and devotion to Church. The humble Teresa has been described by Cardinal Sin addressed to HE Fr. Jose Rizal, Fr. James Hoban, L.L. for longtime spiritual advisor, Fr. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, the famous reformer of the 1970s and a few other personalities in their lives. St. Teresa names her personal odyssey through common everyday events—incidents in one's life that one pronounced—as she says matters of God never need doubt or confirm His one image.

• • •

St. Teresa's book can serve as source of daily meditation. It's available at P100 a copy at the Carmelite Monastery of St. Therese in Quezon City. If you call in advance (tel. 724-2900 and 725-1851), you can reserve copies and even have them sent, graphed by St. Teresa. Proceeds from the book will go to the Carmelites' formation and maintenance needs of the sisters at Carmel Gilmore. They are accepting Dec 9 orders in advance.

People and resources

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THE WORLD celebrated "Earth Day" last Sunday, encouraging widespread of activities to protect, commend clean-ups in Mindoro, tree planting projects and even an "alternative" fashion show. Here in the Philippines, the observance was held on Day at Barbados, an environmental center in the hills of San Mateo. (My apologies for missing the event, I had a deadline to meet!)

• Human concern on renewable hydroenergy, cropland, forests, fisheries and the atmosphere is unprecedented and is unmistakably growing.

Are we drifting towards fascism?

THE ONSLAUGHT killings of journalists and commentators have plagued the Philippines in the international media as a telling feed for media pandemonium. If we look at motivations, however, many murders stemming from private conflicts, and those resulting from Arandaesque, Bayan Muna, Gabriela party-list, are also in the bin for hard source, human rights lawyers appear to have been riddled in the bin, as well.

Hard to be impressed was lawyer Joel Magalong, vice dayan of Mindoro and a prominent human rights lawyer who had strongly opposed the militarization of her province. After a lull, came the hooded assassination amongst last March 31 on lawyer Benjie Lapalong, who is an internationally renowned human rights lawyer whose documentation of human rights work in the country is a tough act to follow. Yes hope have come the final outbreak in Tacloban City of lawyer Federico Macalintal, long-time defender of human rights victims in the Leyte-Samar area. Some two months later saw the ambush of lawyer Charina Zubiya, an energetic human rights lawyer in Northern Luzon, who miraculously survived the six wounds she has suffered.

As if an union of these dreadful things is mine, the military is openly animated the initiation of the Peter Legal Assistance Group, the oldest and largest organization of human rights lawyers in the country. In its list of enemies was influenced organizations.

The list which human rights lawyers, or all lawyers for that matter, play in the political contests of democratic societies is vital. As officers of the court, they are indispensable to due process upon which the judicial system is based. A lawyer who represents a client does not himself become a client; a lawyer who appears for a rapist does not himself become a rapist, or the same manner that a lawyer who represents a rebel does not become a rebel. Only by unscrupulous lawyers and the system would cease to work.

But in a country falling for the trappings of a fascist regime, this distinction is conveniently ignored. The perceived guilt of the client is elevated upon the lawyer. Accordingly, a lawyer who represents a rebel opposing political views customary is done being promoted by the government is labeled as a rebel as well, becoming fair game for physical elimination by the rabid defenders of the coming order.

In the Philippines drifting toward fascist rule? Has even dawning the dark days of martial rule when such killings of officers of free court were considered as hostile and with sneering impunity. President Macapagal-Arroyo's election to the throne has unfolded that if the answer is in the affirmative, then the darkness is continue upon us, lawyers and the broad masses alike, to stop this country from going into such a wretched state.

—NERI J. COLMENARES
Free Labor Legal Assistance Center,
23-B St. Rodriguez St. Ext., Quezon City

A step in the right direction

GRAFT and corruption is as rampant in the government as ever this that it has become a way of life.

It seems that people have accepted that it is an exercise in futility to fight irregularities in government, much like a salmon swimming has pervaded Philippine society.

This deplorable condition exists despite the fact that the Constitution provides that "public office is a public trust" and that "public officers and employees must at all time be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility integrity, loyalty and efficiency, act with patriotism and justice, and lead modest lives."

Other provisions in the Constitution mandate that government officials and employees avoid committing graft and corruption. Add to these are laws that deal with the prevention of graft and corruption, among them the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

Aside from these, there are provisions in the Revised Penal Code which spell out acts of graft and corruption and their corresponding penalties for the offenders (Articles 203-212).

In spite of these constitutional and legal provisions, graft and corruption continue to flourish.

Obviously, the laws in themselves will not lose hope. The deterrence and, deterioration of moral values among our people may not be an effective deterrent against graft and corruption.

Moral values strengthen the character of individuals and would therefore be able to resist all the temptations of acquiring wealth and other material things through fraudulent means.

In this regard, we believe that the creation of the Presidential Committee on Moral Restoration is a step in the right direction.

—ALFREDO S. LAS ISLAS
president,
National Organization of Professional Teachers Inc.-National Capital Region
22 Antonia St., Gateway Ville, Tandang Sora, Quezon City

God's creatures, too

2107 hours after Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was named Pope Benedict XVI, the Google for the Global Treatment of Animals (GTA) issued a congratulatory note urged the new man to include animals in the Catholic Church's canon of concerns.

The new Pope has spoken many angry about the exploitation of all beings, particularly of farm animals. When in was asked about the rights of animals in a 2002 interview, he said, "That is a very serious question. In my view, we can say that first we have to respect human beings. We can't use [as we wanted] ... Certainly, a part of industrial use of creatures, at this point in the world, is way as to produce as large a love as possible, as inexpensive as possible, as much food as possible. But I think we must [also] consider that, the degrading of living creatures in a unhealthy manner is not in line with the intrinsic dignity of the creature itself. It is not in line with the relationship of creatures to God."

Cardinal Ratzinger was echoing official Church teachings, as laid out in the Catechism Catechism, which states clearly that "Animals are God's creatures. We owe animals them with the benevolence care. We their lawful mastership, they them thanks and give them glory. Thou were sore them kindness. We should not call the gentleness with which saints like St. Francis of Assisi or St. Philip Neri crossed animals. ... It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or to needlessly."

It is a letter note to him today, we asked His Holiness to bring his own compassionate wisdom to the public: "We hope that you will continue to speak out for those exploited beings. If twelve years, my institution has travelled with [Catholics] who believe that animals, like people, have a sacred rights on this and want to be protected from violence ... We welcome your words, as they will encourage numerous duties, and humbly ask that you lead the way into a new era of compassion and respect for all living, regardless of species."

Compassion for animals was at as a prominent theme in John Paul II's papacy. Hope John Paul proclaimed that "the animals possess a soul and that man must have and feel solidarity with our smaller brethren." He went on to say that all animals are "God of the creatures and that the rich of God and God's respect" and that they are "as near to God as were are."

Now is hopeful that Pope Benedict XVI will continue to speak out for animals in his papacy as he did as a cardinal, and that he will take a stand against the inhuman treatment endured by God's creatures. Catholics can honor the teachings of Pope John Paul II and the sentiments of Pope Benedict XVI by incorporating compassion for animals more fully into their lives.

—GINA ANTONELLI,
Director of Operations,
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals,
Philippines@Peta.org

PMAP supports four-day work week

THE PHILIPPINE Management Association of the Philippines, a national organization of human resource executives, commends the government's bold and radical program, "Compressed Work Week."

"Compressed Work Week" allows employees to work beyond eight hours a day, without overtime pay, provided they do not exceed the regular number of work hours in a week.

The government has challenged the private sector to seriously consider adopting the program, thus eliciting mixed reactions from different segments of society.

The business sector is mostly in favor of the program, while the labor sector is vehemently opposed to it.

From the financial angle, it is clear that both the government and an employees stand to save substantial amounts of money from this energy conservation program. But some businessmen are quick to point out that implementing the program may even be more burdensome for business.

Nevertheless, even if this program were made legal and proven to be cost-effective, companies will be slow to embrace it because the program removes our deeply entrenched 5-day work week paradigm, as well as our — it has a 40-hour work paradigm, which we have held so dearly for more than 100 years.

The "Compressed Work Week" program is not just an energy conservation program but a significant and meaningful government program that will change the way we do business. Indeed, we have to open ourselves up to new ideas if we have to move forward as a country.

If government work week, just like "Real time," is an example of a program that falls under the umbrella concept of "alternative ol-

Indicators of moral bankruptcy

THE EDITORIAL "Friday the 13th" (PDI, 4/11/05) pointed out that President Macapagal-Arroyo was caught in another outright lie when she claimed that her predecessor was in cahoots with her husband during the Estrada presidency was made up after her Dec. 13, 2003 meeting with the late Pope.

Then, as of course, her booster 2003 declaration that in the May 10, 2004 elections only confident her December 2003 assessment were that she won't run for presidency was a big lie. Like a thief (GMA) who is out to stealing through massive manipulation of public funds, fraud and violence in the 2004 elections.

But here is the truth that GMA cannot escape. Her apparent campaign manager to get down as the Filipino people see her more bankruptcy behind her claims of religiosity and supposedly her deep "love for the poor." Lovers of truth and justice for her political decisions.

EMA projects an image of a victorious Catholic while her police and military agents lose and arrest church leaders and kill priests like Fr. Wilfredo Tadena who courageously supported the striking workers of Hacienda Luisita. She is just like 21 Pontifices Gaspar W. Buth, who uses Christian phraseology to justify his dictatorial rule, and who's acts of impunity and aggression in the name of the "war on terror."

GMA has no moral secondary

Two lives

CONGRATULATIONS! The letters written in early May sign up to its goes of promoting balanced news and fearless views. The Sunday "Talk of The Town" page (page deleted) gives the readers a wider range of opinions and views by different writers, who express of society by fellow and interesting topics. We have presented different opinions on the VAT, Missing As., Hostie Bill, and Lipua Bacolo.

The Sunday Inquirer articles "John Paul II on family and society," Bayless Bandera M. Boy Ramos and Boy Cornelio Bautista of the family Planning Organization of the Philippines asked "Was he hailed as even the threshold of hope for women?" (PDI, 4/10/05) and described him as full of contradictions.

I would like to take in the article on that the Holy Father Pope John Paul II did not remember a

Crossing over through the Net

HI I was browsing through the Inquirer, I remember that Fr. Jerry Orbos has a column in the newspaper every Sunday. So, I had to browse again, this time through the archives and I came across his column titled "Crossing over" (April 3, 2005).

I guess that is the perfect time to tell Father Jerry that I just miss hearing his Masses, but sometimes I imagine me all the time. My husband and I used to attend Mass every Sunday at Christ the King Church just to relax and hear your homilies. But since we moved here to New Jersey two November ago, I could only remember about your Masses. I have been trying to find you. You just don't know how I wish priests here would listen like their Christ's sense of humor.

Besides, I am very hopeful Father Jerry you'll be chosen to come and visit the United States, he will let me know so my husband and I can attend whenever activities he will be having here. I would only hope I was lucky here. He was simply does his truths.

—ALLEN,
arnyn@hotmail.com

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Marcelo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Written allusions to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Inquirer

Do you support the transport strike by jeepney operators who are pushing for a fare hike because of increasing fuel prices?

Yes, I support the transport groups. They are only pushing for additional "kaypan" (who they get to why suffocated).
—**Christine Ramores**, makati city

nope.... #hindering rita pull public transportation=... stuff said [...].
—**Cristina Bagtit**, Makati

A dialogue, for it today or tomorrow, and from this more appropriate rather than a strike.
—**Greg S. Quiapao**, Pasig City

It is difficult a circumstance to support of cause of [one] operation. What shall it done is 2 issues [and] prices & amount of law or oil prices.
—**Glenn Bautista**, pi

Yes, we support! We do them. They just need a jumpstart here like lower oil/high fuel prices. They are working for a just cause.
—**Arnold Cue**, Manila

NO, including private vehicles. And just a few weeks [such] operator greed, also called "freedom" by them & other Filipinos double standards.
—**ann lucero**, sfc

Will cut by not a win-win solution [?] both parties. It number of vehicles & were death affair, is not an excuse for a workers gained.
—**Edgardo Malapang**, Makati

NO, because it is a time, energy and effort not re-made to find day arena. Why not win-win solutions? Kaya ng pinoy yan!
—**Irene Ingcoco**, Davao city

man I get home early, no traffic is Rush-hour should lessen if jeepneys are the road. It made service better.
—**Mary Ann Sandino**, Quezon City

NO! Thinking more citizens like you unbalanced way economy.
—**Jose Quintana**, Baguio City

Bagay sakin mas malaki ang kita ko kc inestimulation than a kin, kawawa kasi ako pasahero na?
—**nathan sanchez**, caloocan

no, transport strike means stop ping people to work and it adds burden to our economy.
—**Beverly vasquez**, Marikina city

Hindi! nasasaring nanakbuhan sa sakit at patinga pa sa mga commuters at kita-cutting ang.
—**jhonnie ann**, marikina

No. It means workers' bosses don't want to make a solution. They'd rather get more profit.
—**Rose Dee**, Marikina City

All sales responses to comments@inquirer.com.ph

on nation ng ang mga EMPRESTUR, na MELANO POWER. Ganon PHILIP Melinda, BIANA PETOC ng LABAZA...
—**Lucia Lachica**, Manila

Yes, I support fuel crisis. They are just fighting for fare hike because of expensive fuel and expensive spare parts. Let's help na man these poor jeepney drivers.
—**Celia Santos**, Quezon City

NO! Just like and I got to a border 2 if pose pipol, Solution: nationalize Gen & republic of civil industry.
—**David Richard San Juan**, Manila

Do you think Susan Roces would make a good leader for the opposition? Why or why not?

NO. Susan Roces would be a big help, if she stays as a humble homemaker. Leadership doesn't come with age and popularity.
—**dhantina sia**, marikina

Susan as a pop is support is god we oppositions. She still with is all. I her position.
—**rose lucido**, Q

YES, because she has INTEGRITY as a LEADER.
—**Jude Jalilad**, Baguio, Benguet

I guess she wouldn't make a good leader since SHE DID NOT be experience enter for a councilor or even a Mayor right?
—**Jesarita U. Magaling**, manila city

Susan like Susan Roces wants to copy Cory Aquino who was then able to unite the people and the opposition.
—**Ann Benevisenta**, Cebu, Zamboanga

I don't think so, kind of opposition will only use her to get a support of a place, sayings from pang-ugit, pagpag ng mga tires.
—**Theresa**, San Fernando City

no, how she has no experience in politics, just confuses she can solve the opposition.
—**Real Lumabid**, Bulacan

YES! BE, Susan Roces is better than ANYONE!
—**Clenea Marie Tiao**, DAGUPAN city Ilin city

Low calming personality & good experience leader but not effective as a leader in a condition.
—**edgardo Panaches**, comp. valley

I THINK will be a GOOD LEADER if pay attention to ... Girl has a good skills of the SPEECH.
—**Alexander Lendiche**, Iloilo city

hindi, kailangan na magkaroon ng maganda ng artista na pinoy? ang dami lang naman nitong problema.
—**sandy agenda**, Ilin city

No, because she doesn't have the skills and experience. Many inspect her for who she is but she should stay away from politics.
—**Tyrone Goya**, Manila

Your Readers, have some comments, suggestions and views on today's issues? Or is it was interested. Tell us about the same you are interested in and the things you want improved in your favorite newspaper. Text INQUIRER <space> your message and send to 2161 (Globe/TM) or 2929 (Globe). The section reserves the right to edit for length and clarity.

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

MILF rejects participation in ARMM polls

DATU ODIN SINSUAT, Maguindanao—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has formally rejected participation in the forthcoming Aug. 8 elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Giving an example the alleged inaction of incumbent and past officials on the plight of the Bangsamoro People, Mohammad Hassal, MILF military operations chief, told reporters here that ARMM officials are just puppets of Malacañang and that the elections would analyze for show.

"Actually in the ARMM, whoever will become the leaders cannot do something because the Philippine government controls them. They are just puppets of the Palace. Whatever the Palace will dictate to them, they will do," Hassal said during a press conference held for the purpose of announcing the rejection.

Several hundred MILF fighters converged here on Saturday to denounce the elections.

Hassal said that instead of working for the welfare of the people, the ARMM has become a symbol of corruption.

He said "there are funds allotted to the ARMM but it only goes to the pockets" of most of the region's officials.

"All of you who are tired here at the camp, did you receive the road. It's up to you. I haven't come here," Hassal said of the pot-holed stretch that led to one of the MILF's mobile camps here.

"With due respect to the others who are running, the election is useless, very unpatriotic," he said.

The ARMM covers the provinces of Maguindanao, Sulu, Lanao del Sur and Tawi-Tawi and the city of Marawi.

The reports that elected governor was Datu Zacaria Candao of Maguindanao. He was succeeded by former Ambassador Lininding Pangkalinan who hailed from Lanao del Sur. Pangandaman wanted a restoration but then President Fidel Ramos asked him to give way to erstwhile Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)-allied Nur Misuari.

Misuari had just signed the 1996 peace agreement and had agreed to run for the regional election under the administration banner.

When Misuari, a Tausug, was removed from office and an election was later held, his deputy Parouk Hussin won and won.

In the years since, the MILF in the autonomous region, leaders of the ARMM chose rebel tribes pitted themselves against each other for the "touch screen" Malasahing endorsement.

In the region's election history, whoever the administration picks is no candidate always wins.

3 NPA rebels killed in new Bulacan clash

SAN RAFAEL, Bulacan—At least three supposed New People's Army rebels were killed in an encounter with policemen in Barangay Coral na Bato here on Monday.

Supt. Edgar Manuel, commander of the 304th provincial police mobile group, said they received a report at 4 a.m. Monday that at least 10 armed men believed to be NPA rebels were seen in Coral na Bato.

Manuel's men were on the village and later engaged the group in a 30-minute gunfight. Manuel's team recovered two Armalite rifles and anti-government documents from the slain rebels. Their bodies were taken to the Fabrosa Morgue in Barangay Poblacion here.

Their identities have not been determined yet.

Supt. Ventinundo Sevilla, provincial police intelligence and investigation officer, said the rebels could be part of the group that attacked a police checkpoint in Barangay Sampaloc on Sunday morning. Two policemen, SPO2 Amante Pasia and SPO2 Renato Ermita, were killed in that attack.

Sevilla said they were also checking reports indicating that the group that policemen engaged in Coral na Bato was part of the NPA unit that Army soldiers had encountered in San Miguel town on Sunday (June).

He said their report showed that the rebels retreated toward Barangay Coral na Bato in San Rafael, about 20 km from San Miguel.

At least six rebels were killed in the San Miguel encounter on Sunday.

Communist guerrillas have been waging a Marxist revolution for more than 20 years, getting their recruits mostly from impoverished rural communities. Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

As this developed, the Commission on Elections said some candidates have already started filing their certificates of candidacy yesterday.

Lawyer Renato Magbanua, Comelec-ARMM director, said the filing of the certificates of candidacy would end on April 30.

"We are in a hurry disseminating this information," he told the Inquirer.

As least 25 positions are up for grabs, including the governorship and the vice governorship.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos has urged the Department of Budget and Management to fast track the release of the budget for the elections "so as not to delay our preparations." Jaelle Ann Mendoza and Gloria Fernandez, PDI Mindanao bureau

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WHALE SHARK INVASION
A replica of the world's biggest fish, the whale shark, known in Bisaya, Sarangay as butanding, is paraded through the town's streets during the celebration of the Butanding Festival last Sunday. [illegible]

Start of trial of Damalerio case delayed

By Jaime B. Balanban
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—The Regional Trial Court yesterday ruled the pre-trial conference of the murder case filed against a police officer who allegedly killed Pagadian-based journalist Edgar Damalerio is moot.

The ruling after the lawyers of accused PO2 Guillermo Ongalo wanted to have the case dismissed on the ground that the information against their client was "facially defective."

Judge Ramon Cadilla of RTC Branch 13 reset the pre-trial conference for today and ordered the defense to file their motion to quash the information within two days.

The court also gave the prosecution another two days to submit its comment on the motion to be filed by the defense.

This was the second time that the pre-trial of the case was postponed. It was originally set on April 11 but was rescheduled to April 23 because the accused had no lawyer then.

Ongalo is accused of killing Damalerio, managing editor of the Mindanao Scribe and a radio commentator of dxRP on May 13, 2001.

The police officer, who has been detained since March 9 at Bagong Buhay Rehabilitation Center, pleaded not guilty to the murder charge during his arraignment before Judge Rolando Cesar of RTC Branch 20 in Pagadian City on Sept. 14, 2001.

When the pre-trial conference was about to start yesterday, defense lawyers Flavio Cordero and Hermenio Hermosisima Jr. questioned the validity of the information against their client.

"They argued that the information was defective because it was not with the approval of the city prosecutor of Pagadian City," said Acting Cebu City Prosecutor Nicholas Ibñez who heads the three-man prosecution panel.

The information he studied against Ongalo was signed by members of the panel formed by Regional State Prosecutor Wilfredo Eco of Western Mindanao.

They were Assistant Regional State Prosecutor Ricardo Calubon, Second Assistant Provincial Prosecutor for Iligan Soonto Araujo and Fourth Assistant City Prosecutor Julius Hechanova.

Retired Justice Secretary Hermenio Perez, in his memorandum order number 16 dated July 5, 2001, directed Eco to take over the preliminary investigation as requested by lawyer Frisilo Jose, chief of the Criminal Bureau of Investigation Pagadian District Office.

In an order dated July 4, 2001, Eco formed the panel headed by Calubon and designated them as acting city prosecutors of Pagadian to conduct the preliminary investigation.

Pagadian City prosecutor Ely Valdo Icon had also approved the endorsement of retired Assistant City Prosecutor Alandeva Reyes, saying over the Mindanao Scribe to the regional state prosecutor.

Icon said the defense panel cited a recent Supreme Court decision ruling in March 2000 that the regional state prosecutor had the authority to designate acting city prosecutors.

"The prosecution considered by saying the panel assigned to conduct the preliminary investigation were designated as acting city prosecutors of Pagadian by then Justice Secretary Hermenio Perez after the local prosecutors were asked to inhibit," he said.

Assistant Cebu City prosecutor Bernadette Echevarria, a member of the Damalerio prosecution team, said they would oppose the motion of the defense for lack of basis.

She said the designation of the Calubon panel was valid because Gemma Damalerio, wife of the victim, had asked the Pagadian City prosecutors to inhibit themselves during the preliminary investigation.

BIRTHDAY PARTY TURNED SOUR

85 people hospitalized after eating spaghetti

DAUPHIN CITY—At least 85 people, including many nine months and 50 years, suffered from food poisoning after eating spaghetti served during a birthday party in Mansaug, Pangalatan on Saturday afternoon.

Rogelio and Tia Vicelina, host of their neighbors and relatives of the party's host, started to suffer from stomach aches, diarrhea, fever and vomiting on Sunday morning and were taken to the Region 1 Medical Center where emerging room of that day.

The regional Department of Health has sent an epidemiological team to Mansaug, 20 km northern, to investigate the food poisoning.

Children's party

Report is said the victims attended the birthday party of a two-year old boy in Barangay Poblacion in Mansaug. The boy was also hospitalized.

Seventy-eight of the victims were taken to the RMC, 45 to the Pangasinan Provincial Hospital in San Carlos City and nine to the Mapandan Community Hospital.

Most of the victims were declared out of danger and released from the hospital on Monday morning.

Dr. Eduardo Jesares, RMC regional director, said his office sent medicines and intravenous fluids to the RMC to replenish the hospital's supplies.

Dr. Irene Castro, RMC chief, said the victims needed to be rehydrated.

Mild-to-moderate

Castro said while the victims only suffered mild to moderate food poisoning, the cases would have been serious if the victims' low body fluids were not replenished immediately. The children were given intravenous fluids while the adults were given oral rehydration salts.

A father of one of the victims, quoting accounts from people who helped prepare the food during the party, said the catering used to make the spaghetti sauce had bubbles when it contained was opened.

Castro said the RMC laboratory has started testing pool and vomit samples of the victims and leftover spaghetti sauce to determine the cause of the poisoning.

Ingredients

The cook, Erlinda Bautista, said she used Filipino spaghetti sauce, catsup, tomato paste, liver spread, ground beef and homemade hotdogs to make the spaghetti sauce.

She said she ate spaghetti during the party but did not get sick. However, her daughter, Nina, 15, and son Jeffrey, 18, were among the victims.

Attorney Chow still confined at the RMC is nine-month old Joanna Marianne.

Marianne's mother said she did not feed the boy spaghetti, prompting Castro to say that it could be coincidental that the baby also had diarrhea.

"We have to trust the water in the area, too," he said.

Jamaico said he asked the epidemiological team to get samples of all food and drinks served during the party.

"We will study all possible causes," he said.

Erlinda Sarah-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Teeners arrested for stabbing teacher dead after alleged molestation incident

By Jhoram Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—A high school teacher was killed about dawn on Sunday when an 18-year-old neighbor stabbed him 15 times in his home on Gil Bulfred Street in Barangay Mabolo in this city.

The victim was identified as Joseph Tupaipo, 37 and bears 3-year class adviser in one of the public secondary schools in Mandaue City, Cebu.

The police arrested the suspect, Mark Tolibao, 18, at the house of a relative in Barangay Mabolo, Talisay City, Cebu at about 10 a.m. on Monday about seven hours after the crime was allegedly committed.

Arrested with the suspect was his 17-year-old cousin whom Tolibao claimed was his companion in killing the teacher.

SPO1 Eugene Pagay said the suspect's neighbors were alerted after two neighbors saw them running out of the victim's house at about 2 a.m. on Sunday morning blood-stained shirts.

Pagay's claimed that Tolibao admitted to him that he stabbed the teacher several times in rage when he found that he had been molested while he was sleeping inside Tupaipo's house.

But he said charges of robbery with homicide would be filed against the two before the city prosecutor's office after it was found that Tolibao and his cousin took an expensive cellular phone and the class ring of the teacher.

Dr. Lorna Rasers, Mandaue City Schools Division superintendent, said they could not believe that Tupaipo did that to the boy. He was a well respected teacher by his students and there was no derogatory reports that we got against Tupaipo," she said.

According to Pagay, the suspect claimed that he, his cousin and another friend were drinking at a basketball court near the house of Tupaipo.

Tupaipo allegedly invited the boys to his house where they continued drinking at 11 p.m. of the said day.

SEA CAVES
Filipino tourists frolic in one of the 111 caves found on the Hundred Islands and which, Alaminos Mayor Hernani Braganza said, are waiting to be discovered. The caves are just one of the attractions on the Hundred Islands which will celebrate a Festival of the Hundred Islands on April 28. [illegible]

German, Pinay held for sex attack on girl

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

KORO CITY—Police arrested a German tourist and a Filipina on Boracay Island in Aklan last Friday for allegedly molesting an 11-year-old girl.

Klaus Peter Lemke, 55, and his companion Lolita Becerra, 37, of Binalonan town in Region 01 celebrated, have been detained at the Boracay Special Protection Unit (BSPU) station after the girl's mother filed a complaint before the alleged molestation.

PO2 Rachel Quiano, of the BSPU Women and Children's Desk, said Desiree admitted to being a freelance sex worker while Lemke claimed to be an accountant in Mannheim, Germany.

Police said the victim, a Grade 5 pupil, was watching a show around 6:15 p.m. at the Bigahorde Music and Sports Bar, where Desiree was employed, when the girl was offered by her.

Desiree left the girl after she refused the offer but returned and again offered her to the girl which she accepted. Lemke and Desiree then went to the girl.

The German and Desiree allegedly convinced the girl to go with them in the Angol Nature Resort near Boat Station 3 where the coupled was billeted.

Gov promotes use of organic fertilizers

DUMAGUETE CITY—Negros Oriental Gov. George G. Arnaiz is promoting the use of organic fertilizer all over the country to reduce the prices of inorganic fertilizer, protect the environment and reduce the volume of garbage.

Arnaiz said he was selling the idea to the members of the League of Provinces in the Philippines as he pointed out that the country would benefit a lot if all the provinces would adopt his suggestion.

"If everybody uses organic fertilizer, it will bring a lot of benefits to the country. It will bring down the cost of inorganic fertilizers because the demand for it will become lower," Arnaiz said.

In Negros Oriental, the governor said the provincial government, through the Provincial Agriculture Office, is now aggressively pushing the use of fertilizer from organic materials using the Night African Crawler earthworm.

He said some businessmen in the province were investing on the production of organic fertilizer using such earthworm, which would be fed with organic garbage.

Arnaiz said the waste disposal in the catchment would become the organic fertilizer.

"The price of this fertilizer will be cheaper and it is environment-friendly," the governor added. Rosey O. Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau

ROUNDUP

2 soldiers killed

BAYAUD CITY — At least two Army soldiers were killed during separate attacks by suspected members of the New People's Army (NPA) in Bayaoang, Banao and Nalos, reports reaching the military and police regional headquarters here said yesterday. Two more are killed near Cpl. Constantino Magbanua of the 203th Infantry Battalion ambushed in Palo, North Eulalio. Magbanua was escorting a customer in a tricycle owned by a certain Wilfredo Ng Yiabelo Sr., kapatong de Kalilo, when a bomb planted on the motor. **Anthony F. Alfelo, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

Money on gathering

CITY OF CALAMBA — Sen. Paul Salazar, chairman of the tribal committee in Senatorial Members, yesterday told the lawyer that 50 leaders are screening about 10,000 Mangyans to join seven tribes attended the general assembly of Pueblo Mang Tabalan na Kaisa ng Mindoro (Pakaisa) on April 12-13 at Elite Barrios Barangay Bulmoles, Magpayong town. Besides tribesmen. The gathering included various concerns and problems. Among those discussed were the distribution of households of the Mangyans, social needs and the voting issue. The Barangayan na Lusong Mimosa Oriental Mindoro, Pakaisan's income part in Oriental Mindoro, was also supported in the assembly. Senator said. **Marianne Rivas, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

More graduates in Ilocos

LUCENA CITY — Commission Penaba Jr. Commission and Higher Education regional director announced that there would be at least 19,000 college graduates this year in the Ilocos region. This, Peralta said, represents an increase of about 1,000 over last year's number of 18,146 graduates. He admitted, however, that the CHED regional office could not release data on graduates for the current year as it was still awaiting reports from colleges and universities. Data records showed that there were about 17,000 graduates in the Ilocos region in 2004. **Jocelyn Sowden, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

Illegally cut lumber seized

LAGUNA CITY — Operatives of the Provincial Police Office (PPO) in Iligan quit the Department of Environment and Natural Resources confiscated 1,700 pieces of newly sawn lumber during a raid on a warehouse in a local businessman in Barangay Magsaysay, Initiao, Zamboanga del Norte. In a report, police identified the suspect as Miguel V. Salas, resident of the same place. The lacking team seized a total 24,000 board feet of assorted lumber species to be seized by the Illegally cut lumber. Salas, with an estimated total value of P118,000. In a related report, the 41st Provincial Police Mobile Group intercepted a six-wheeler cab loaded with 12,000 board feet of assorted lumber in Barangay Dumlan, Sta. Fe. Police arrested the suspects Dumlan, 50, driver of the truck and resident of San Carlos City. Police seized the confiscated lumber over to the Philippine Coast Authority. **Emilio F. Mallari Jr., PDI South Luzon Luzon Bureau**

New market to be finished

TABACO CITY — The new Ilocos Tabaco City Mall and Supermarket is expected to be finished next month, according to Mayor Alex Bueno. Bueno said the new market project has a total cost of P100 million. With its new access to neighborhoods and other nearby islands, Bicol is fast developing as a center of trade and commerce and even with Ilocos since 1,200 registered establishments. The city is known for its pottery products and whose name its rich heritage through the annual "Tabak Festival," which is celebrated this month of March. The festival, featured in an annual parade of floats, artisans and dramas of simple country life. **Bernardito Ebreo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau assistant bureau**

2 prosecutors questioned on narc cases

WATCHFUL EYES
A soldier carrying a machine gun keeps tight watch at the entrance of the Jolo provincial capitol during the visit there of U.S. Ambassador Francis Ricciardone April 21. AFP

Irregularities alleged in 'softness' on drugs

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Ilocos Bureau

BAGUIO CITY — City Prosecutor Augusto Sulla and First Assistant City Prosecutor Amor Gobuyia are facing investigation for alleged irregularities in the handling of drug-related cases in the city.

The investigation followed a complaint filed by City Prosecutor I. Eduardo Jarque and Assistant City Prosecutors Abraham Ilarjuna and Jeanette Isabel-Ilarjuna for alleged "serious irregularities and abusive exercise of authority and grave judicial discretion."

They asked Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to relieve Sulla and Gobuyia of their administrative and routine authority pending his action on the complaint.

Gonzalez said the Department of Justice had conducted an investigation of an administrative complaint filed against Sullo and Dalmudis.

But he told the Inquirer that even before the written complaint was filed by the three prosecutors, he had already sent a DOJ investigating team to Baguio to look into the matter after several complaints he had received against the two officials.

The investigating team already submitted a report to him, consider said.

"On the surface, there appears to be grounds for the complaint but I am still examining the investigation report," Gonzalez said, adding that he did not want to jump to conclusions on the matter.

"At least the necessity of justice is to solve enough to listen to one side. There are no grounds for the charges against us," said Sullo in a separate interview.

He said they had already sent to Gonzalez their reply to the allegations against them, even before the three prosecutors filed the written complaint.

"I am just hoping the secretary of justice will endorse the complaint fairly and ultimately clear our names that have already been destroyed by unjust malicious publicity," Sullo said.

He said the purpose of the complaint was to malign him and Gobuyia, especially since a copy was released to the media.

In their complaint, Jarque, Ilarjuna and Isabel-Ilarjuna said they were disgusted and dismayed at the "blatant manner" in which Sullo and Gobuyia had been exercising their authority over the assistant city prosecutors and were "administering upon other issues of justice."

"The City Prosecutor's Office of Baguio City is now a favorite means to the Halls of Justice of talk and rumors, the lawyers and the judges of being a bastion of corruption and serious irregularities to the detriment of drug cases," the three prosecutors said.

They noted questionable orders of their superiors to release "drug pushers and users from police lockup without on the basis of highly irregular, repetitious and premature written resolutions that did not discuss the facts and the law relied on, but dismissed to release the drug offenders were based."

There were instances when informants signed by known prosecutor for filing had been reviewed by their superiors without their knowledge, they said.

Sometimes, they added, the issuance of the unsigned inquest prosecutors were usurped and cases were automatically taken over, either by the reviewing prosecutor or the city prosecutor, thus resulted in release orders of drug pushers and users, and the eventual dismissal of cases.

They also cited increasing records of drug-related cases, nonexistent surveillance and removal of cases from the inquest prosecutor, dismissal of resolutions by the city prosecutor without making any references to their resolutions, among other offenses.

Mayor warns kidnappers of relatives' abduction

CORNADO CITY — It will be an eye for an eye.

A mayor in Maguindanao has threatened to retaliate the relatives of the suspected kidnappers of a Filipino-Chinese leader if they failed to release their captive.

Initial findings town mayor Tomas Mendoza made the warning as he identified Sinal "Sin" Sarao as the brains behind the abduction of Benny Cota, owner of Sol. of Marketing store here, on April 6.

The military and the police said they suspect that Cota has been taken by the Pentagon gang, which claim to monetary because of its recent high profile abductions and its alleged ties with the Jemaah Islamiyah, a terror network in Southeast Asia with links to the al-Qaida.

But Sharoza said Sarao is a secondary kidnapper and a "rental."

Sarao "must personally demand on kidnapping charges in connection with the abduction and subsequent release of a wealthy trader, like it or not on bail.

Mendoza said he had already talked to Sarao's two wives who promised to relay his warning to their husband.

"I know the whereabouts of your relatives in my town. So if you don't want to have orgasm in the future, release Cota as soon as possible," Mendoza warned.

Sarao, he said, was sighted, along with his followers and the captive, in the outskirts of Sultan Barkuro several times. **Joaquin Mendoza, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

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Vigilance paves way for sea urchin's return

SANTIAGO, Ilocos Sur — Sea urchins, a gourmand's delight known here as maimaingking, is making a comeback because of community regulation.

Vice Mayor Phompon Mendoza said the population of maimaingking, which used to be ignored in seaside villages here, was almost decimated because of rampant fishing and poaching in his town.

Mendoza said the one gathering of baby sea urchins soon found to the near declaration of maimaingking in San Esteban town. Sea urchins gathered in San Esteban are sold to eggs growers in this town and Sta. Maria.

Mendoza said to counter the loss, the barangay town council passed a resolution calling for a stop to cyanide fishing and sea urchin poaching in the town.

The council instead proposed sea ranching or open-sea refinery to preserve the local population of sea urchins. Under the proposal, baby sea urchins would be fed twice a week with nutrients. Locally known as orange, for eight months until they add to commercial buyers.

Bacon Sur Rep. Eric Singson and the owners of Sta. Lucia and Santiago are among the areas starting the culture of sea urchins.

Although cultured ma'maingking tastes different from wild sea urchins, Singson said the culture of this species creates has a big business potential.

A piece of maimaingking is sold for P50 in Metro Manila.

Discriminating consumers, particularly diners in Japanese restaurants, seafood are ambrosia fresh. Sea urchin is known as uni to Japanese and it is a prized delicacy.

Singson has helped form a divers' group to protect sea urchins and coral reefs in his district from cyanide and dynamite fishing. These divers, alert the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of violators, he said.

"Eventually we will have to establish a marine sanctuary to preserve the sea urchins," Singson said. **Priscil Cimera and Lucio G. Bolbin Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau**

METRO

Bus reduction on Edsa seen

MOTORISTS can expect a measure of relief from traffic jams at Edsa in three months with the reduction of the number of buses plying the major thoroughfare, according to Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board chair Elena Bautista.

Bautista said a survey would be conducted in the next three months to gather concrete data on how many passengers use the Edsa buses, and how many buses actually need to be deployed there.

But she added that by her reckoning, the current occupancy of buses along Edsa is only 52 percent, meaning even with almost half of the buses gone, the remaining public would still be serviced.

"I just need scientific data to back up the logical plan. In the event that came are filed against me, I have the data to back me up," she said yesterday. The plan features reforms to ease the diversion of the excess number of buses to other nearby routes.

She also said the popularity of the MRT, which traverses Edsa, is one reason for the planned reduction of buses along the route. The MRT already services around 500,000 passengers daily, she added.

The LTFRB chair also noted the discrepancy between the number of bus operators serving Edsa, and the number of operators in the provinces. In Edsa alone, there are 30 operators with franchises.

Bautista added that this was an offshoot of her predecessor's earlier move to suppress all applications for franchises at Edsa after the MRT was built. When she joined the LTFRB in 2005, her first move was to impose a moratorium on the granting of franchises. Cella R. Salamero

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo talks to the man behind the ocean park project (from left): Andrew Lee, chair, and Lim Chee Tong, executive director of the China Oceanis Group, and Tourism Secretary Ace Durano. MALACAÑANG PHOTO

Ocean park to rise in Manila Bay area

By Leila B. Salaverria

IN LESS than two years, Metro Manilans will be able to enjoy interacting with dolphins, sea turtles and other marine life in an ocean park at the boardwalk behind the Quirino Grandstand in the Manila Bay area.

The foreign-funded park costing $20 million is similar to those found in Hong Kong and Singapore.

The Philippine Tourism Authority (PTA) yesterday signed a memorandum of agreement with the Chinese and Malaysian consortium China Oceanis Group Ltd. (COGL) for the building of the Manila Ocean Park. President Macapagal-Arroyo was on hand to witness the signing between PTA Chairman Robert Ueste Barbers and COGL's Lim Chee Tong.

Under the agreement, the COGL was given a 25-year lease to some parts of the PTA-owned Manila boardwalk, and will shoulder the cost of building the facilities for the park which is expected to be open by December 2008.

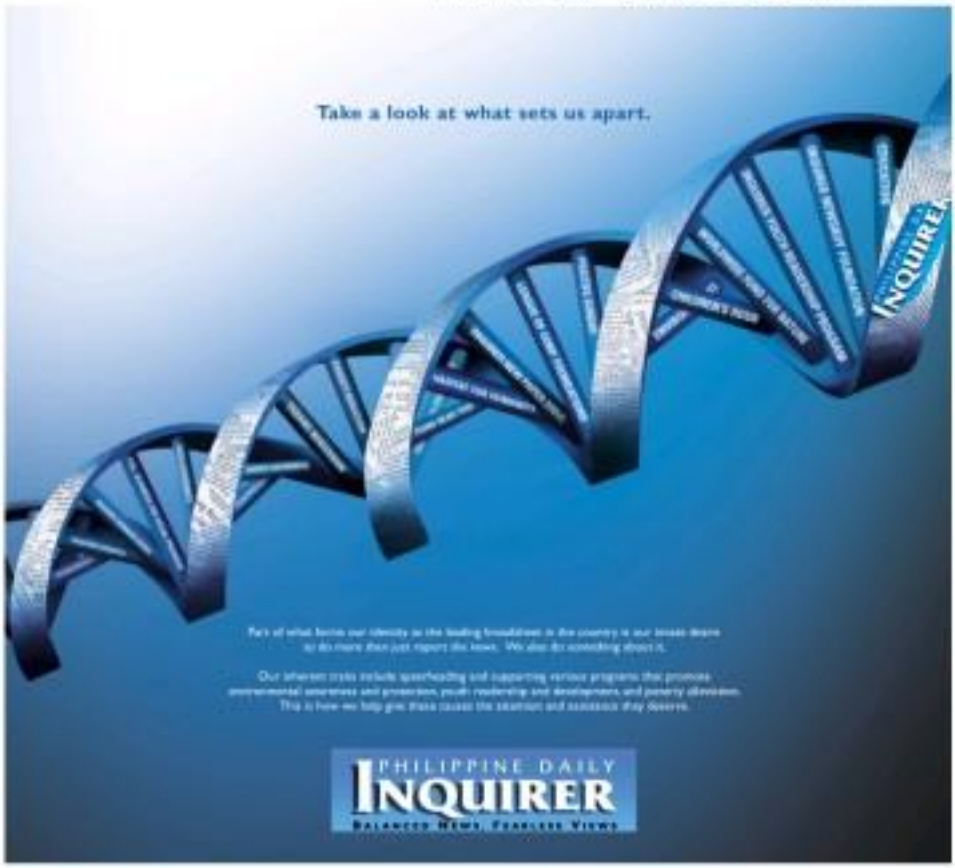
Among the features of the park are open marine habitat facilities, dolphin feeding activities, a sea turtle nursery, a marine garden, and even a swimming area. The COGL would also build a plaza for special events and areas for shops and restaurants. They will also develop the park located in front of the boardwalk.

The consortium will also pay a yearly rent of P16.5 million, with an upward adjustment every five years.

Barbers hailed the project as a major coup for the country because it is expected not only to enhance local and foreign tourism and to generate jobs for some 2,000 locals, but to pave the way for further infrastructure development.

COGL director Lim Chee Tong said the park would also be used to advance the cause of marine environment protection.

And since a swimming area and snorkeling activities would also be available at the park, the consortium would be charging the nearby resort around the Manila Boardwalk.



SSS site reclassification bogs down project

By Christine Gaylican

THE SOCIAL Security System (SSS) has urged the Quezon City Council to approve immediately the reclassification of its 3.6-hectare commercial zone so it could go ahead with the P6 billion property development project.

The project has been pending for six years now.

The passage of City Ordinance No. 2004 changing the governments institutional classification of the site into a commercial zone is needed to secure a second approval from the Investment Coordination Committee for the building's six-to-8-center project proposal submitted by SSS and the consortium led by developer SC Ho Inc.

SSS officials, led by president and chief executive officer Corazon dela Paz, made a personation yesterday to Mayor Feliciano Belmonte and the councilors, emphasizing the need for and urgency of the ordinance.

The SSS Corporate Center project had been endorsed by Mayor Belmonte, but some city councilors have reservations about the project. Dela Paz assured the city government that Chow would be a fixture of new taxes and investments to the city. It is estimated the project would result in P58 million in real estate taxes and 15,000 jobs be created.

The property development project, now estimated to be worth P6 billion, includes a plan to develop the 12th property on four hectares corner Edsa into an SSS Corporate Center with a twin-tower structure that will be the pension fund's new headquarters.

Also part of the project is the redevelopment of the SSS' existing 12-story headquarters, also on East Avenue, into a new hospital for members.

The SSS, a pension fund for private sector employees, had been discussing with the banking group the property project since 1999.

Dela Paz said the pension fund would not spend a single centavo for the project. She said the SSS' contribution to the prospective joint venture would be its property.

The SSS was forced to dip into its reserves last year to pay claims that exceeded by P3 billion total contributions during the period.

SC Ho Inc is a leading international consultant specializing in real estate, infrastructure and construction projects. It employs 2,000 people and maintains 40 offices in over 20 different countries. The firm has worked on projects in more than 80 countries and turns over consultancy fees in excess of $1.5 billion a year.

Press club unveils Plaridel statue at tribute tomorrow

By Tina G. Santos

A MAN famous for journalism—and an alternative to the older club.

There were exactly what events journalists had in mind when they organized Samahang Plaridel (SP), a new press association named after a man who had valued freedom of thought and the pursuit of truth.

Plaridel was the pen name of Marcelo H. del Pilar, who in the pages of history as a selfless propagandist whose unmistakable of the nebulizer newspaper *La Solidaridad* helped to mobilize reformist sentiments and ignite liberation ideas in the 1890s.

His selected writings are now being republished in major local newspapers, a project initiated by the historian of Philippine colonialism Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, a director of Samahang Plaridel.

"One of our goals is to bring Plaridel's memory and his writings alive by propagating his ideals, because even though he is venerated all over the country, many people still do not know him and have no real him because he wrote in Spanish and old-fashioned Tagalog," Nakpil said.

"We also intend to promote camaraderie among journalists, particularly those who have been practitioners for the past 20 years or more," she added.

Samahang Plaridel was founded last two years ago by media practitioners and other communications specialists who are considered the sons of Philippine journalism.

SCULPTOR Julie Lluch adds finishing touches to bronze statue of Marcelo H. del Pilar

Its roster of officers include former publisher Inquirer Teodoro and columnist Neal Cruz, Manila Bulletin associate editor and columnist Adrian Cristobal, Philippine Star publisher Max Soliven, Manila Bulletin editor Gil Ichan Jr., former Bulletin editor Ben Rodriguez, and former Press Secretary Rod Reyes, among others.

Many of them admitted that putting up Samahang Plaridel came about because of their disappointment over the membership of the National Press Club (NPC)—once regarded as an elite, exclusive club of legitimate journalists—and repeated attempts to discuss the shoddy, corrupt, according to Cruz.

"The NPC used to be an sensible and friendly place where awesome, relaxed with colleagues after their deadlines. Newsmakers were even buttered and honored to be invited to dine and drink there," said columnist Julius Fortuna.

"But now, its members had strangers in their own club. We don't recognize most of the people who frequent the club these days," he added.

Samahang Plaridel officers, however, were quick to add that the new press club does not aim to replace the NPC.

"But SP will endeavor to stick as close to the original purpose of the Press Club, as possible), which was to group only those who are engaged in journalism, those who are dedicated and have remained loyal to their vocation," Cruz stressed.

For now, the Samahang Plaridel had opted to put up a place where its members could unwind after deadlines.

Aptly named The Front Page, a clubhouse and pizza bar located on the Teodoro's Life building at the corner of M.H. del Pilar and Edsa. Guests just across the National Library, but now becomes the latest watering hole of journalists.

"One can enjoy music, dancing, drinks, fine food and contivial company on the first floor, and a lounge with a waiting room, piped-in mood music, chilldren room, in-case-videoke, and another bar, television sets, chess sets and an office with computers on the third floor," Cruz said.

Although the clubhouse is exclusive to members of the Samahang Plaridel, the place has to open to the public.

But not everybody can join the club since membership in Samahang Plaridel is by invitation.

"We want to provide an association where we can maintain the standards of journalism," said Soriano.

"All membership applications have to be endorsed in and must have the unanimous approval of the board of directors," he added.

Apart from upholding the dignity of the journalism profession, Cruz said another thing reflects to the man regarded as the chosen patriarch of today's journalists would be the unveiling of a bust or three-life replica of his likeness tomorrow.

Holding an imposing but welcoming stance, the seven-foot bronze statue of Del Pilar stands on a six-foot pedestal at the Plaza Plaridel, the clubhouse's park in front of the Manila Zoo on Quirino Avenue, Malate, Manila.

Crafted by renowned sculptor Julie Lluch, the P1.3-million statue is a joint project of the Samahang Plaridel and the Manila city government.

"The statue tells us to look at reality. Del Pilar reminds us of the cost of freedom. He also wants us to open our eyes to the ills and abuses in society," said Lluch.

Fugitive bank exec returns

By Margaux C. Ortiz

AFTER escaping to the United States with millions of stolen dollars in tow, a fugitive bank official is arriving in the country following her arrest last month.

Former Union Bank cashier Maria Victoria Zapanta, 49, of No. 22 Flora Vegas St., SF Homes, Paranaque City, was arrested for illegally-illegally acquiring $7 million or P369 million by falsifying commercial documents, according to Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Chief Francis Chua.

Chua said US Immigration Judge Rose Peters of the Executive Office for Immigration Review in San Pedro, California, "has ordered Zapanta to be returned from the US during the period of April 23 to 26."

The betrayed chief said Zapanta, who faces 4 charges of fraud that through fabrication of commercial documents, would be detained at the NBI jail upon her arrival in the country.

"Although qualified theft is bailable, we are confident that Zapanta would not be allowed to post bail because there is an alleged flight risk," Diaz said, adding that they are looking for 12 other bank officials hiding in the US for similar offenses.

Zapanta left the country for Hong Kong and the US on Sept. 15, 2000, after allegedly fabricating bank documents and amassing hundreds of millions of pesos.

Pasig cops to Subic for retraining

AFTER three of its policemen were implicated in a failed robbery more than a week ago, it's a foolhardy for a police community practice in Pasig City.

Xantra's Police Director Clarence Oscar Sidemeratu told the bureau he had sent all the policemen from the San Antonio Community Precinct (PCP 1) to the national police training camp in Subic, Zambales.

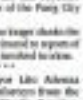
Replacing them are policemen from the district mobile force, most of them fresh graduates.

The three policemen who were reportedly involved in the robbery on April 15—PO1 Melvin Claveria, PO2 Rodolfo Molina and PO1 Lauro Hipos—are now facing summary dismissal proceedings, Sidemeratu added.

Though he had an direct participation in the alleged crime, precinct commander Senior Insp. Raul Castillo had also been replaced.

Chief Insp. Jaime Cachuel has taken over the post. *Edwin C. Bonilao Jr.*

Killing of DFA official a black eye to RP



ON TARGET

Rannie Ludlow

THE POLICE should immediately catch the killers of foreign affairs Assistant Secretary Silvia Ramos. If they don't want to be accused of sitting on their butts.

The killing of Ramos gave the country another black eye in the diplomatic community. Ramos was a respected diplomat. She didn't seem to be a shock to foreign diplomats.

If the police fail to arrest the killers in time, the country would become a "dangerous assignment" for foreign diplomats. If that happens, foreign countries would not think twice about restricting the Philippines as tourists.

* * *

Reports say that while the intruder/s were on the upper floor of their house, Ramos' younger sister, Letizia, got out of the house and ran to a nearby police precinct.

But the killers were already gone when the police arrived.

The policemen who received the report should be investigated for the delay in responding to the alarm.

What was the reason for the delay in going to the house of the Ramoses? Do vehicle in take them to the scene? Lack of fuel?

What is their reason this time for arriving late at the crime scene?

* * *

Among all policemen in the world, fifteen Manila cops are reportedly the fastest in arrive at the crime scene.

In Los Angeles, cops take five minutes to arrive at the crime scene. In Tokyo, it's four minutes. In Hong Kong, three minutes.

In fifteen Manila cops are in the scene in seconds. Why? Because some of them are criminals.

If fifteen Manila cops were not at the scene in seconds, then they were not in the police station.

I brought out the bad jobs—"bad" for the cops—because an employee of a money changer shop was robbed of P10,000 in broad daylight in Pasig City.

And who were the robbers? Three members of the Pasig City police force.

Such news no longer shocks the citizenry. They're inured to reports of policemen being involved in crime.

* * *

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza has banned policemen from the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) from operating in his city.

Atienza was irked by a report that an MMDA checking operation in Pasay was countered by the shooting to death of a policeman and the wounding of another.

Although MMDA enforcers are not issued firearms, some of them carry guns secretly.

Most MMDA enforcers are very abusive. Their abusive behavior is condoned by MMDA officials.

I found this out last year when I brought before MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando a bus conductor who complained of being roughed up by MMDA traffic enforcers.

The bus conductor was accompanied by a female passenger who witnessed the roughing.

What did Fernando do? Nothing.

Fernando said that he was standing by his men. I said that there was a witness, the female passenger who came along.

The issue is not what the MMDA chief said. Probably the witness was sent by Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay with whom he was having a spat at the time. He said that the female passenger was a Makati resident.

Because of that, I lost my respect for Fernando.

* * *

Other mayors in Metro Manila could take a cue from Mayor Atienza. They should ban MMDA enforcers in their cities or towns.

If they insist against Fernando, perhaps he will change his stance and no longer condone the abusive behavior of his enforcers.

Makati's Binay was right in standing up to Fernando, who has become a party crasher.

* * *

I condole with Rep. Ben Bitoc Abakan on the untimely demise of his daughter Cleo Maria, 19.

No amount of words could allay the anguish being suffered by the congressman and Cong. Abakan on Thursday when Cleo Maria, junior at the University of Santo Tomas, died of cardiac arrest.

Cleo Maria was a graduate of the Philippine Science High School.

An ex-prisoner keeps the faith

By Fran Kaigbak

MANUEL Harris, 48, found God on death row.

Convicted of arson and multiple homicide by five lower courts, he was imprisoned for six years, three of them on death row.

Harris was a student of agriculture engineering when he got involved with delinquents in his neighborhood.

One of them tried to collect P50,000 from him. When Harris refused, the extortionist, who had connections in the police hierarchy, accused him of being responsible for the burning of two movie houses where 17 people died and more than a hundred injured. Only 26 then, Harris was arrested on June 22, 1970, and was sent to jail.

Detained for 24 hours, he was not given access to a lawyer or his family. He stayed at the Manila City Jail during the first year of trial.

Despite the testimony of four of the prosecution's star witness that he was in school when the crimes was committed, Harris was still found guilty and put in an isolation cell to await his execution. "I considered suicide," he said. His attitude changed when a Catholic missionary visited him upon learning he was a death convict.

MANUEL Harris: "What I do is part of a crusade to help many prisoners-turned..."

Harris found refuge in the Catholic prison ministry after he was transferred to the New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa. From 1986, he pursued his missionary work, sharing his experience in speaking tours around the country. Disastrous pauperized for prisoners.

"I was once told to hold on to my faith," he added. "It's my turn to tell other prisoners not to lose hope because the Lord loves them, too."

To send donations or to offer volunteer services, call Manuel Harris at 09/8-0665794 or to Arnold Lyon at 436-2533 or 0917-2398123.

Crematorium proposed for QC

By DJ Yap

QUEZON City residents may soon be given the option to have the bodies of their dead cremated in a public crematorium, instead of burying them in the city's already crowded cemeteries.

Councilor Rudy Malabanan said seven other councilors have urged Mayor Feliciano Belmonte and the city engineering office to plan for construction and design of a city crematorium.

Malabanan, chairman of the committee on cemeteries, said the proposed crematorium would answer the expected shortage of burial spaces in the city.

The city has an average annual population growth rate (1995-2000) of 1.51 percent. This year, it has an estimated population of almost 2.4 million people, based on 2000 projections.

Malabanan added that the proposed crematorium would answer the expected shortage of burial spaces in the city.

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ENTERTAINMENT

E-mail: pi_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Bernie G. Velarde

Pami seeks Unesco help vs scandal TV

Talent managers are set to meet today with local officials of the int'l agency

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Core Beats

THE PROFESSIONAL artist Managers Inc. (Pami) is seeking the help of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) against scandal-oriented television talk shows.

In a phone interview with Inquirer Entertainment, Pami member Melinda Espinosa, a Unesco commissioner for communications, said the UN agency "has expressed grave concern over the long-term effects of too much bad gossip on the younger generation."

Espinosa has worked with the agency for three years now. Among her fellow commissioners are broadcaster Charlie Lanuza and Kanta Bartila.

An artist manager, among her talents are award-winning actor and director Gene Montilla.

Responding to an official website, the Unesco National Commission of the Philippines pursues the member organization's goals of "human and sustainable development and building a culture of peace through its fields of competence: education, science and technology, social and human sciences, culture and communication."

Same wavelength

Espinosa recalled when Pami's crusade was first brought up in a meeting of Unesco Philippines: "We all got excited. Unesco International is always on the lookout for advocacies in line with Third World development goals. Because we were on the same wavelength, it was immediately agreed that key Pami members should hold a dialogue with Unesco people."

The meeting is scheduled for today with Unesco president Jose Enrique Avilon, chair Isbel Fuentes, and members Shirley Kuan Ashikes, Ed Tadrilla and Espinosa in attendance.

Count in NCCA, CCP

Andy Jose Unson, the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) have joined the crusade against "sensationalism in media journalism" on television.

The heads of the NCCA and the CCP—executive director Cecile Guidote-Alvarez and president Nic Jimlin, respectively—have both signed a position letter drafted by award-winning filmmaker Joel Javier Reyes.

The letter was processed to advertising groups, who endorsed it to their clients, resulting in a pullout of ads from some talk shows over the weekend.

FRIDAY'S US TOUR

Allen some years, Diana "Mapanas" Cuenca goes on another concert tour of the United States next month: at the Morse Performing Arts Theater in Jacksonville, Florida, May 6; Rosemont Theater in Chicago, May 14; Mark Dana Arena in Trump Taj Mahal in Atlantic City, May 12; Reno Events Center, May 20; Starlight Theater, Pala Casino Resort and Spa in San Diego, June 2, and Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, June 11.

JOEY Ayala in luggage

Why pirates don't bother Joey Ayala

By Francis G. Arevalo
Pit Southern Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY—Singer Joey Ayala says his records are not pirated because few people appreciate authentic Filipino music.

Ayala, known for cultural environmentalist issues and use of traditional instruments, was here on Friday for a special concert sponsored by Tanggol Kalikasan (Save Nature) in activities that will benefit the Mayon Volcano and the Bantaling, or whale sharks.

The singer had just come back from a performance in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

"Organizations that invite me to perform know that the entertainment has always been my advocacy," Ayala told his audience on Friday. "I make sure that audiences feel love for nature and get a taste of authentic Filipino music, especially now that people tend to disregard pure music and the environment."

The Tanggol Kalikasan gig was intended "to remind political leaders, local government units and the host country of the issues concerning environmental problems in the region, especially those brought about by mining activities."

Only hope

Ayala told Inquirer Entertainment that the future of the local music industry lies in promoting traditional Filipino music.

He Pittsburgh concert was very encouraging to attend, he said, with the music very well-received—especially by the foreign audiences.

Ayala said the performance was just part of his visit as a fellow to a seminar for music and culture exploration.

"I was very stimulated," he said, "talking and performing with people who appreciate their culture and uniqueness."

CDs of his songs that he brought were sold out, Ayala added.

MOTOR SPORTS: F1 San Marino Grand Prix, Race Day, 8:30 a.m. (1), STAR Sports – Take another look at the first race of the season.

BASKETBALL: NBA Playoffs, First Round, Pacers vs Celtics, Game 2, 7 a.m. (ch7 p.m.); Rockets vs Mavs, 9:30 a.m. (ch9:30 p.m.); Solar Sports – Boston and Houston seek to go 2-0 against Indiana and Dallas, respectively.

Schedule subject to change without prior notice.

Cage program shifts to PBA

By Marong B. Castillo

THE NATIONAL team program of the Basketball Association of the Philippines has been entrusted to the Philippine Basketball Association yesterday to make sure "the best players available" are tapped for international competitions.

With the RP-Colt ans Utd national team officially disbanded as a result of the shift in the cage program, Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco gave the responsibility of choosing the coach for the coming SEABA and Southeast Asian Games tournaments to national coach Chot Reyes.

Reyes is in the process of forming a team of PBA stars to compete in the Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) championship in September under an agreement earlier forged between the BAP and the privateers.

"It's better that we start from scratch," said Cojuangco after announcing his decision to give the responsibility of assembling the strongest possible team for the SEABA and SEAG to the PBA during a meeting of the recently formed basketball association attended by officials of all the country's cage bodies.

Cojuangco washed off all pleas for consideration from the BAP which was represented in the meeting by vice-president Christian Uy, director Uko Khonina and legal counsel Raul Rivera Jr. Uy had pleaded for retention of coach Rogelio Ravena, the former Ust Warrior in the UAAP, who has handled the Colt-a Utd program since its inception. But Cojuangco stressed that down along with the proposal of the BAP to include seven Philippine Basketball League standouts to the Colt-a Utd team from Ateneo, who got to settle off only two games before he was cut off by the POC president.

"Let us give the coach (Reyes) the opportunity to size up the team, the competition," Cojuangco said.

Under the new national team scheme, the members of the Colt-a Utd squad will be included in Pool B of the PBA program, where they will be joined by players coming from the PBL, UAAP, NCAA and other collegiate leagues.

Pool A will be composed of the 20 PBA players now making it to the Asian championship, who can be tapped to reinforce the SEABA and the SEAG teams if necessary.

Reyes had earlier said he favored fielding the strongest team to the SEABA, where the top-two finishers will qualify for the Asian championship. Tim Cone, coach of the RP Centennial team of PBA stars who placed third in the 1998 Asian Games, agreed with Reyes.

Cojuangco voiced doubts' belief. "I see don't do well here (SEABA), I don't know how we will handle the Olympics," Cojuangco said.

Also present during the meeting held at the Cojuangco home in Greenhills Village were PBA commissioner Noli Eala, his PBL counterpart Chino Trinidad, Asbes Santos, Joey Saguisag, Virgilio Eak, Moying Martelino, Jun Bernardino, Jean Henri Untalan and Danny Francisco.

Absent were BAP president Tito Lhuillier and Graham Liu, the association's ex-gen who is facing deportation charges. "I don't know where they are or why they are not here," Cojuangco said.

Ball is no longer in hands of BAP

By Franch Ochoa

THE VERDICT came with the cold finality of an execution.

The Basketball Association of the Philippines, the controversial national organization of the country's favorite sport, has had an ineffective program. And the diagnosis came no less from the BAP's erstwhile staunch ally.

"Sad to say, your programs are no longer effective," said former BAP constituent Virgilio Eak, also the president of the athletics and chess associations. "We've had losses in athletics and swimming, but none as embarrassing as the ones in basketball."

And the powerful basketball committee seemed to nod in unanging agreement, putting the program of the Southeast Asian Basketball Association championships, and most probably the Southeast Asian Games, in the hands of PBA national coach Chot Reyes.

Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco wasn't as harsh, but he admitted that the committee, which he chairs, has pulled off one feat the BAP has failed to do.

"[We] brought all the players," Cojuangco said. "We have all the people involved in basketball. We have the PBA, we have the PBL."

The committee, which has effectively installed the BAP to an appointed body started out with a self-imposed deadline as far as eligibility is concerned. But even Cojuangco admitted that he isn't closing the door on the possibility of the committee stretching past its published shelf life.

"We're really for the locals and the SEAG," Cojuangco said. "But it all depends on [the stakeholders]. If they feel that it's worthwhile to keep it running, then we'll keep it running."

"This is a good step in the right direction," said PBL commissioner Chino Trinidad of the committee. "It all boils down to leadership. With the kind of leadership Mr. Cojuangco has shown, just know that [the committee] is a good thing for basketball in the country."

"More than anything, it's been a unifying force," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala, noting that Cojuangco has managed to bring together parties who stood on different ends of the spectrum during a long-drawn battle for control of basketball's national sports association.

Asked what the committee could do differ-

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Suico, Thai foe weigh-in today

CEBU—The official weigh-in for tournament's Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation (OPBF) title showdown between junior lightweight champion Nonoy Suico against challenger Muangkhlang Kaiwichian of Thailand is set today at the newly built Hukay Gabal Gym in Labangon.

Promoter Sen "Mahor" Sahal-Ismail promptly said he is pleased for the weigh-in starting at 1 p.m. which will also serve as the inauguration of his well-furnished boxing gym.

Games and Amusements Board boxing division chief Rommel "Bebot" Resurreccion, who will supervise tomorrow's festivities, will also oversee today's weigh-in together with officials of GMB-7.

The dynamite-fisted Suico will make his OPBF crown his fourth time against Thai challenger in a 12-round war headlining the "Kalibo-gan sa Hinirao 3" card.

Reigning Ring Magazine featherweight king Manny Pacquiao and former and concurrent Board chairman Eric Pedrain are slated to grace the Suico-Kaiwichian showdown. Also set to attend are GMB commissioners Angel Ilustrisimo and Alex Sagkumanan.

In the chief supporting bout, Sahal-Ismail Boxing Association No. 1 heavyweight Nicko Gajon of Mabolo Sahal Stable takes on Thailand's Issachai Thokkiatsuri in a 10-round war-title clash.

Gajon is set to vie for the WBA-Asia interim title later this year.

Other bouts put Louie Bentigar against William Moran (8 rounds); Gabriel Pamor versus Enzo Barrientos (8); Aris Ario against Alex Dagang (8); April Sinco versus Dodong Bahle (4); Jessie Mahinguit against Alvin Mendiola (4) and Bryan Rosal versus Jun Cesareo (4). Sahen Lagandoy

JUMP CHAMP. Germany's Meredith Michaela Beerbaum-Zaare a jump on her horse Shortlist by during the Budweiser FEI World Cup Jumping Final in Las Vegas, Nevada, Apr 23. She won the event. AFP

Sorry loss for Galido in Istanbul

VETERAN Reynaldo Galido lost by a point in a bout with rivals of Team Philippines said the Filipino closely won Saturday in the start of the Asian Contact International boxing championships in Istanbul, Turkey.

And with Mehtic Bersena going down to another hometown loss, the OF squad was down to five men in the tough event that attracted 181 male fighters and 127 female ringers from 23 nations.

Galido lost to Turkey's Aden by the skin of his teeth in the welterweight division, 17-16, while Mehtic Bersena absorbed a 27-22 decision from another Turk, Ayderin in the flyweight class.

Filipino coaches Boy Alduro and Nicolas Amoral and team leader Ulysses Pineda said the referee of Galido, which clinched bouts and rivals from the Turkish boxing fans, was a little pill to swallow.

Galido, who fought in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics as a light welterweight, was in complete command of the four-round bout right from the start of the bell, suggesting his rival with solid body blows and crisp combinations on the face.

The Turk was able to counter-punch at times but the judges still gave Galido's bouts and battle steel.

"Congratulations to boxing," Galido said. "Sana mabigyan pansin ng mga judges, tulad (That's boxing. What's) sa boxer was, the judges of was see it the other way)," lamented Velasco, who was given a mini-ovation for his bitter protest against the scoring of Galido's fight.

Featherweight Jesus Tipay, lightweight Genaboy Basallo and light welterweight Mark James Medijen take up the subject for the Philippines Sunday.

Upon takes on Turkey's Ozgu Kaymaz and Ayden Mahmut, and Medijen tangles with Dominuet of Israel.

Jaro targets WBC int'l flyweight title

HILIPPINE junior flyweight champion Sonny Boy Jaro goes for the vacant World Boxing Council International flyweight title against International Boxing Organization flyweight champion Jake Matladi of Bronx Sports Productions.

Topping the double-header is the South African welterweight championship between title-holder Joseph "Smokin' Joe" Makaringe against mandatory challenger Welcome Ntsekhe.

Makaringe has a 26-2 won-loss record with 21 KOs while his rival has 13 victories against three losses and a draw.

In his McLaren-Mercedes, holding off Alonso through the first turns, but he missed midway through his pitch lap, allowing Alonso to take the lead.

Raikkonen continued around the track at minimal speed, chose into the pits, and retired.

"Obviously I am disappointed as I had a great start and was really building on my lead," Raikkonen said. "At least we know that the car has the pace to both qualifying as well as the race. With some improvements that the Spain in two weeks I am looking forward to a good race."

Raikkonen started with an eighth-place mark in Australia last month. He won ninth in the Malaysian GP and came third in Bahrain three weeks ago. AP

Alonso hottest Formula 1 guy

BRAZIL, Italy— Two-season ago, Kimi Raikkonen was getting all the accolades as the next big thing in Formula One. Barking record behind Michael Schumacher in the standings.

Now, after his third straight win, it is Natalie's Jean Alesi-ho Grand Prix, Fernando Alonso is in that post this.

Raikkonen was on Sunday to change things but suffered a mechanical problem.

After establishing his fourth career pole position Sunday, Raikkonen—maintaining his lead from his today's first qualifying session—the Finnish driver was forced to abandon the race with a driveshaft problem after eight laps.

Raikkonen got off to a good start

Batawang to battle Gonzales on Friday

PAN-AFRICAN junior flyweight champion Bert Batawang Ogbay a dangerous fugitive Gonzales this Friday night on eye on a possible Philippine boxing title's Ramon Boxing Association junior flyweight Vicky Saturnino of Indonesia.

WBA no. 7 Bert Batawang is currently on Pan-Asia Boxing Association junior flyweight Vicky Saturnino of Indonesia in a welcome rubber match. The winner is certainly will be the next challenger for the vacant WBA title.

Batawang, the World Boxing Association No. 7 contender, and former Philippine junior fly champion Gonzales will clash in the main supporting bout for the World Boxing Foundation title main event between Filipino welterweight king Elesha Gustalvero and Australian Steven Shields.

Should Batawang get past Gonzales, he may meet Yuttasak, the WBA No. 3, for the right to challenge for the vacant WBA junior flyweight title. Sahen Lagandoy

RACING TIPS

AT 12:15 P.M. MD. 1609

Race 1—1. Lyang Thunder 2. Big Bucks 3. Gretchen 4. Awesome Power

Race 2—1. Idiots 2. Take Ten 3. Bride of Shrek 4. Tell Me Again

Race 3—1. King Glen 2. Close Account 3. Dancing Love 4. Aero

Race 4—1. Tiger Warrior 2. Speed Blessings 3. Miss Golden 4. Velvet Stamper 5. Double Bill

Race 5—1. Silver Order 2. Super Bottle 3. Gold Medal 4. Blink Quick-Lightning Magic

Race 6—1. Eastern 2. Speed Hall 3. Queen of Aces 4. Mary

Race 7—1. Ly Caribbean 2. Love Tango 3. Long Road 4. Last Dance

Race 8—1. Jeng Shui 2. Iri Gold 3. Jeng Thunder 4. Sgt Maverick 5. Sunny Delight 6. Son of Caribou

Cebuano bets take spotlight

FOCUS will be on the local bets as Cebu hosts the 2XC Regional Badminton Championships beginning today at the Cebuano Sports Badminton Club courts in Lahug, Cebu City.

Led by Batang Pinoy champion Monnyan Arnaiz-in and Clint Arnaiz-in and the top Bisdonos in the recent PBDAA competitions, the two-day event ending Friday flows close to 300 participants, including eight bets for top honors in various categories plus battles in the 2XC Open Championships.

Hideyuki Takano, president 2XC SPORTS, Inc., Bonn Rafael, general manager, 2XC SPORTS, Inc., Cebu City Vice Mayor Mike Rama, Cebu Sports Commissioner chair Jonathan Guardo and Cebu Makers and Commission Bureau chair Patrick Crespo will hit the ceremonial serve at 10 a.m. Joining Amaraiz-in in the women's division chair are Lourdes Apodaca and Neilah Pontellas while Amaraiz-in will have his hands full in the men's side against the likes of Jonna Sison, Nino Palacio, John Dreaning and Nino Anthony Go.

Contenders in the elite division are Hazel Perez, Inca Morenda, Jacbelyn Rapigal and Caryl Allawal, several places in the 2005 PBDAA Games, in the ladies event while PBDAA titlist Patrick Bearts, Ronald Daymiel Ralph Mercado, Epyro Miguez, Bobby Flores and Ellenyn Dc and Cagayan bets Julian Magallanes and Rogelio Natan lead the men's survey.

Meanwhile, Cebu Badminton Club, Inc. president Ellenyn Dc said Cebuano bets will have their hands full in the men's side against the likes of Jonna Sison, Nino Palacio, John Dreaning and Nino Anthony Go.

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DEEPEST DIVES: The Bayani Tenpin Bowlers' Association of Makati Classic Bowling Tournament opened recently in Powerbowl, Rockwell Center, Makati. Diving Suites of Bayani Pride... Jeffrey Chan and four-time world champion Bong Coo led the ceremonial roll.

Pocketing the lessons

THE POCKET tournament of the PBA that ended yesterday sees the stuff that makes the league's season for being. It was a relevant audience because it was a course towards the right direction. It gave our Philippine Team training for eventual battles something to chew on. As to boring, it was an exercise that was necessary to get the players ready for the rebound to the launch of Chot Reyes' hops.

The visitors may be weak, but that is no reason to dismiss outright the event as a laughing matter. Every extravagant against teams from overseas gives us pointers on vulnerable to undermine, no matter the quality of such.

So, the Italian team was laughable enough. But reasons were mention pervaded in the end, though, when the Italians themselves, seeing the foolishness of their cause, and may in the country after absorbing a drubbing from a mere PBA team in a one-up match, showed real stuff of spirit. That averted a international disaster.

There was much lesson to be learned there, not only on the part of the PBA but also on the Italian side.

Claiming it had left its top two players behind in Italy, the team officials took it upon themselves to swallow their pride rather than have it shredded into smithereens by shooting their arms in the PBA pocket meat. In surrender, there is also victory somewhere. If you failed that opponent's aim of annihilating you.

If defeat it can be called, it's not a temporary setback.

Let's have more of this kind of reminiscence. For me, it constantly exposes our team to different brands of strategy by the opposition, which should enhance us no less than to at least own bedspread for another. It's not the win, but the "brother would" effect absorbed by our own through battles they engage in against totally new opponents.

What the idea is good, by all means let's go for it. One defender is not enough to fill a spot-hole.

* * *

I SALUTE once more the likes of Commodore Danny Matero, the president of the Makiri Golf Club in Silang, Cavite, and his Employer, the grounds chief of Makiri Golf Club, for their splendid partnership in putting their golf course in tip-top shape despite the thunderbolt of summer.

Participants in the highly smashing 7th Makiri Golf Invitational every payday in their praise of the course, which yielded not even a single pouch of bruises to any part of either the fairways or greens.

Buddy Encarnado and Henny Andrews were able to their usual brilliant selves in overlapping the rivers, making sure that not a single kick, minor or otherwise, to mar the four-day tournament.

It was love fitting therefore that MCC Chair Josie Jayme (the birthday kid himself that day) paid tribute to the wonderful deeds of these guys—and many more—calling them "the unsung heroes of the tournament" during his warmly applauded speech at the Awards Night ably emceed by Ace Navarro and Dick Sumilang.

Lifted out into the plane when called off by Atlanta Airlines but I couldn't care less. I was a hare jump, but also, instead of my succeeding it, another would soon engulf me. I was not able to see it when Atlanta officials had denied my request to cancel its validity because its prescribed cutoff time—months. I hope the winner doesn't suffer the same sad fate should he decide to also ask for an extension.

Imagine the bedding I had to endure: Cup to toss, naked away from friends each time the inner would come up.

Oh, well, Jimmy Barroquillo, the humble PAL president who was at the Awards Night on Sunday, would have shaken his head in disbelief had he known about my woeful experience. We had a good-natured conversation lining up for dinner, and I did not want him to suffer from indigestion trying to unlock the key if I had told him about the tale of the ticket that got away.

But anyway, past is past. You win some. You lose some. Life has got to move on. See you next year in the Bill Haines Invitational.

Guilty or no guilty.

* * *

FEATHERS: Bob and Rose Dix had known lovely hosts to their dear friends that included Immigration Commissioner Al Fernandez and Sen Miguel Zubiri when they were married at the Manila Cathedral during the weekend to celebrate the double birthday celebrations of Russell (Apr 8 23) and Bob (April 24) at their charming farm in Caballegan somewhere in Pangasinan. Terribly missed missing prime, Mayor Alfonso "Twinning" Rodano of Malasiqui, Pangasinan. What happened, primo? Work, work, work? Happy birthday again to Russell and my many Bob! Belated greetings also go to Bobby Rose.

SPORTSWATCH

'Swing a club, build a church'

SILANGIN Francis Xavier Parish Confraternity will invite to more 23, at the Covenant Golf and Country Club in Batulao, Batangas. With the theme "Swing a club and build a Church," the tournament aims to raise funds for the completion of the construction of the St. Francis Xavier parish church, which was started eight years ago. Msgr. Alfredo Madrigal says, parish priest, and encouragement December 30, with all participants assured of a gift. For participation, call 043-931-1188.

NCA 7-Cock Derby all set today

GAMEFOWL fights are expected when the National Cockers Association (NCA) presents another highbrow 7-cock derby beginning at 9:30 a.m. today at this air-conditioned Fiesta Coliseum. Co-hosted by Gov. Eric Vitarra, Rep. Claude Bautista and Valenzuela Mayor Rex Gatchalian, the 7-cock qualifying round today culminates with the championship on Thursday, April 28. Two entries characterize this in the NCA 7-Cock Derby held last April 12 and 14—WPM Wing Sanctuary of Rep. Herman Pano and Bay Jaycees Brangaysan Bulacan of Gov. Vitarra and former Ambassador Claudio Teehankee. Meanwhile, another NCA 7-Cock Derby kicks off this Saturday, April 30 at 9:30 a.m. For inquiries, contact 09 153888 and 09 153813.

Big Texas cockfest slated on May 3

BIG TEXAS has produced an entries, the upcoming "One-Cock Fastest Who Knows Chicken" slated on May 3 at Texas Cockpit Arena (Santolan Highway, Barangay City) will start at 7 a.m. "Eli manager, "Li Mei (not sure) that because no reservations as of yesterday, the total number of entries could reach 500. All cocks in a pair joined prize of P6,000,000 double entry, but in only P5,000. The top three major prizes are P 135,000 for first, P68,000 for second and P40,000 for third. The promoters, Sam Mendoza, Ralph Palicarpio and Mon Bolivar, said that the first 20 winners will get a complete title along with the cash winnings. Call 300 0 876 0 731, Angeles at 0921 4 43 0 862 (Cabaz, Pulilan) and Bulacan will host the "Capitol 4-Cock Derby" on May 15 and 29 at the Alva Cockpit, with a guaranteed prize of P150,000.

PAGULAYAN resumes winning ways. AP

Pagulayan bags ₱.5M in Canada

REIGNING world pool champion Alex "The Lion" Pagulayan defeated ex-world titlist American Earl "The Pearl" Strickland, 15-10, to bag the $10,000 champion's purse in the recent SML Entertainment 9-Ball Championship in Calgary, Canada, over the weekend.

Going to the championship round, the native of Cabagan, Isabela, and now residing in Toronto, Canada, disposed of Mike Yancowski, Eldon Gauthier, Mike Vidas, Craig Kerry, Fil-Canadian Edwin Montal and Danny Basavich.

Strickland forced Pagulayan in a rematch via an 11-3 victory over Brady Gollan in the one loss side.

Strickland settled for $6000 in prize money. Tyler Edey earned $1000 in bonus money for being the top finishing player from Calgary.

Meanwhile, Billiard and Snooker Congress of the Philippines president Ernesto "Ernie" Pajardo lauded Pagulayan's triumph.

"It shows that we really have a good chance of winning in the SEA Games," said Pajardo, noting the recent international victories of Efren "Bata" Reyes, Francisco "Django" Bustamante, Gandy "Sapsal" Valle, Warren "Warrior" Kiamco and Ramil "Bebeng" Gallego.

Aristeo "Putch" G. Puyat, the acknowledged godfather of Philippine billiards, announced earlier that Pagulayan will carry the national flag in the 2005 Manila Southeast Asian Games after the Bureau of Immigration approved the dual citizenship of Pagulayan, who grew up in Taguig City.

Reyes and Valle topped the first two legs of the SMB Asian 9-ball tour. Reyes, along with Kiamco and Gallego, also won in the 9-ball tournament in Japan. Bustamante topped the Bali, Indonesia, 9-ball tour.

Marlon Bernardino

De Asis, Yambao rule Global race

JUJET de Asis and Liza Yambao found little resistance in ruling the first Bonifacio Global City Summer Run Sunday in Taguig City.

De Asis clocked in at 31 minutes and 33 seconds to claim the men's 10K run while Yambao completed the 10K course in 38 minutes and 40 seconds to top the distaff side.

De Asis of the Philippine Army pulled away in the last 4 km to win P4,000 cash and P6,000 gift certificate.

Hernani Sore settled for second place at 32:12 while veteran runner Reynaldo delos Reyes placed third at 32:25.

Yambao, the 2003 Milo Marathon National champion, led the race all the way in the women's 10K race of the first Global City Summer Run held in partnership with Adidas.

"I was fortunate my coach allowed me to run," said Yambao, who is a member of the Philippine training pool slated to compete in the 10K and 5K events of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games in November.

Placing second to Yambao was Hazel Madamba who was timed at 39:04. Joanne Managat was third at 41:37.

In the 3K age-group category, Jonas Sugalan dominated the 10-12 years old category while Michael Seville bagged the 6-9 plum.

The 5K age-group winners were Marjohn Salanawon and Bernadette Magaso in the 14-29; Allyson Reyes and Shirlene Sia in the 30-49; and Jacob Cruz and Luz Encarnacion in the 50-above.

The winners in the 3K and 5K races got P3,000 cash purse and P6,000 worth of gift certificates each.

Curtan, Estayo 1st Velo Challenge frontrunners

VETERAN Paterno Curtan and Tagaytay City's Nilo Estayo hold the top two slots in the men's Elite and Jan Paul Morales also of Tagaytay and Jerwin Torres of MayniLA lead in Juniors as the First Velo Challenge hits its seventh day of racing beginning at 9 a.m. today at the Amoranto Velodrome.

Curtan, a bemedalled Southeast Asian Games track specialist, has 37 points on three gold, two silver and four bronze medals to lead the category in the event co-presented by the First Gentleman's Foundation and Air21 (Sagot Ko, Padala Mo!)-Tour Pilipinas Inc.

Estayo, running under Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino's team, has a 4-3-0 gold-silver-bronze performance for a second-running 35 points, shoving the injured Paulo Mapanul, who is hanging on at third with 34 points in the event also supported by Pagcor, the Philippine Sports Commission and Philippine Olympic Committee, Isuzu D-Max (the Philippines' No. 1 Pickup), Sharp Phils., San Miguel Corp.-Viva Mineral Water, Vittoria Tires, 93.9 iFM, RMN dzXL 558, David's Salon and Intrasports and aired over dzSR Sports Radio 918 khz.

Morales has 5-0-1 haul for 32 points, two points ahead of Torres, who has so far garnered two gold, four silver and one bronze medals in the Velo Challenge that is part of the cyclists' preparation for the 23rd Southeast Asian Games and sanctioned by PhilCycling.

Ahead in the women's Elite is Marites Bitbit with an 8-1-0 (G-S-B) for 44 points, while Edilberto Lantin leads the Executives' category with 1-4-1 for 28 points, Gerardo Amar the Veterans' class with 4-2-1 for 31 points and Virgilio Valenzuela the Masters' division with 4-2-0 for 29 points.

Quezon City heads the local government units teams with 9-15-11 gold-silver-bronze for 181 points, followed by Puerto Princesa City with 10-14-13 for 180, MayniLA with 9-12-13 for 177 and Tagaytay International Convention Center with 10-5-3 for 98.

DIAGON HOBIE Cup Winners. Rookie sailor Michael Ngu of the Manila Doctors Hospital and Asian Games veteran Nestor Soriano (third and fourth from left) copped top honors in the maiden staging of the Diagon Cup held at the Taal Lake Yacht Club in Talisay, Batangas. Also shown are (from left) Monchu Garcia of San Mig Pub and Restaurant, Gabriele Boschi of Rudy Project Eyewear, Evangeline San Jose-Giorgetti and Sergio Giorgetti of Diagon Awards.

Welcoat eyes No. 6 against Nenaco-SBC

GAMES TODAY (*Pasig Sports Center*)
2 p.m.—Bacchus vs Magnolia
4 p.m.—Montaña vs Nenaco

AFTER back-to-back escape acts, the Montaña Jewels expect to breeze past the winless Nenaco-San Beda squad today in the PBL Unity Cup eliminations at the Pasig Sports Center.

The unbeaten Jewels are hands-down choices to pick up a sixth straight victory in their 4 p.m. date with the cellar-dwelling Lions.

Despite the Jewels' impressive streak, coach Robert Sison said Montaña can't afford to relax.

"The elims is still a long way, anything can still happen so we have to stay focused and play as hard as we can," said Sison. "We're winning games right now but we need to play harder and better."

It's coach Koy Banal, though, who needs to demand aggressiveness from the Magnolia Ice Cream Wizards.

The defending champion Wizards have been struggling in the young tournament although they are still favored against the inexperienced Bacchus Energy Kings in today's opener at 2 p.m.

The Wizards got off to a quick start against newcomer Harbour Centre last Saturday only to fall apart in the closing minutes and take a 71-66 setback.

But the Wizards will try to improve their 2-3 win-loss record behind Arwind Santos, Dennis Miranda and Neil Rañeses.

The Jewels, meanwhile, are coming off dramatic victories, with Froilan Baguion hitting two game-winning baskets in a row against Welcoat Paints (88-86 in overtime) and Toyota Otis-Letran (74-72).

Expectedly, though, it's still the seasoned duo of Alex Compton and last conference's Most Valuable Player Jon Dan Salvador who will lead the Jewels' offense.

But Nenaco-San Beda will try to end their five-game losing streak with shooter Noy Javier, a former member of the RP Team-Cebuana Lhuillier, Jerome Paterno and Yousif Aljamal at the helm.

The Lions went down to Granny Goose, 69-57, in their last outing while the skidding Energy Kings will also try to bounce back from their 89-79 setback against Welcoat behind Romar Menor, Nani Epondulan and Paolo Hubalde. *Jasmine W. Payo*

NEW RP QUARTERS
Philippine Sports Commission officer-in-charge Butch Ramirez, Philsoc head Roberto Pagdanganan, and POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco inspect the new home of the RP athletes at the PhilSports in Pasig yesterday
AUGUST DELA CRUZ

New PBA role up in meeting today

NOW comes the tricky part.

And it's not about basketball.

The Philippine Basketball Association board convenes in a special meeting today to decide, among other things, if its millionaire stars are needed to bail out the ineffective national team program of the Basketball Association of the Philippines—even for a small tournament like the SEABA (Southeast Asian Basketball Association).

And should help come, both the PBA and the BAP will be on a collision course as to what colors the RP team will wear in the event.

Cebuana Lhuillier has been bankrolling the BAP program for the last three years, and the participation of the PBA in the SEABA will bring about complications in advertising.

The PBA board has been very strict in the colors that its players wear in international events in the past, and making a SEABA team littered with PBA stars to don Cebuana Lhuillier jerseys is improbable at this point.

"There will definitely be a problem there," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala after yesterday's meeting of the basketball bodies. "We have our own sponsor and I think that (donning the Cebuana Lhuillier uniform) will run counter to what we have."

The PBA, which has taken the lead in organizing and funding a team that would hopefully propel the country back to the 2008 Olympics, has a contract with San Miguel for its players playing for the national team.

The SEABA is not a POC-sanctioned tournament since it is being run by the Fiba, the world governing body for basketball.

Teams in that tournament are allowed to wear commercial endorsements, unlike in the Olympics, the Asian Games and the Southeast Asian Games, which are all controlled by the International Olympic Committee.

Jean Henri Lhuillier was present in the meeting and the BAP, represented by vice president Christian Tan, director Lito Alvarez and legal counsel Boni Alentajan, obviously did not want to let go of the association's benefactor.

Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, the Philippine Olympic Committee president who presided over the meeting, had told the BAP that it is better for the program to start from scratch, the sponsors of the team included.

"Let us not use the word disband, because that is bad for the sponsor," Tan told the body.

"I think the sponsor (Cebuana Lhuillier) deserves the recognition, because they have been here from the start," said Cojuangco.

Musong R. Castillo

Ball no longer...

From page A23

ently from the BAP, Eala said that "bringing together the sport's major stakeholders is a big thing. Before, there was an issue of trust and sincerity. Right now, you know everybody's sincere in really improving basketball in the country.

"I just hope this committee can bring reforms to the basketball hierarchy," he added.

The verdict on the BAP's effectiveness came on a day when its officials started to flex its muscles in the committee. During the first meeting, secretary general Graham Lim was reduced to nodding in agreement to the reforms being plotted in the basketball landscape.

Yesterday, BAP vice president Christian Tan put forward two motions of his own: The retention of the Cebuana Lhuillier squad reinforced by PBA and PBL players for the Seaba tournament and the return to the old days when the BAP green-lighted players who wanted to turn professional-a rule that, he said, would make top amateurs more readily available for national commitment.

The committee fine-tuned the first request, saying the Cebuana Lhuillier players would simply be absorbed into the national pool already put in place by the PBA, along with players from the PBL.

Moying Martelino, also a member of the committee, said the advent of open basketball rendered Tan's second motion useless.

"That law was necessary before because professionals were not allowed to represent their country in international meets," Martelino explained.

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BUSINESS

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Management takeover of CAP pushed

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

A SECURITIES and Exchange Commission (SEC) commissioner overseeing the operations of troubled pre-need firm College Assurance Plan Philippines Inc. (CAP) has proposed eight "urgent and drastic" measures to preserve the company's assets.

The measures have been forwarded to the Commission en banc, the policy-setting body of the SEC, for approval.

In its eventual report, the SEC oversight committee recommended that the Commission appoint a full-time management committee (mancom) for CAP Comprehensive Insurance Plans and Pension Corp. and, if possible, all other affiliates of CAP such as CAP Health, to replace their existing boards of directors.

The committee found that CAP had gone to its affiliates with a constant stream of cash flow to provide the liquidity requirements of the company, thus expanding its recommendation to include affiliates under a possible mancom. The mancom will be tasked to manage the assets of the company, secure and preserve all records, study the viability of continuing CAP's business, and monitor the impact of CAP's financial problems on plan holders.

CAP said it could not comment on the proposals as it has yet to secure a copy of the oversight committee report.

The committee said there was also a need to look at CAP's problem as possibly affecting not only the pre-need industry but also the wealth. Administrative Organization (OSEC) and the insurance industries. It said CAP's problem stemmed from the fact that it had dependent on its affiliates—CAP Pension, CAP Health and CAP Life—for liquidity support.

"Not only has CAP compromised its plan holders' interests but it has also precluded the investors of the plan holders of CAP Pension and its other affiliates. It might be more effective if the Commission can address CAP's problem by managing the financial impact caused by related party transactions," the committee said.

The committee also said the Commission should formulate remedial actions to anticipate the surge of plan holders claiming on their policies this coming school year.

T-bill rates decline across the board

By Michelle V. Rama

TREASURY bill rates declined across all maturities yesterday as the high level of liquidity among banks and investors on the local front encouraged them to reconsider for the short-term government securities.

"Much of the previous concerns of the market have subsided due to recent good news, such as the government's budget deficit being within target," Deputy Treasurer Eduardo Rodolfo said in a briefing after yesterday's auction.

The bellwether 91-day treasury bill rate, used by banks as a benchmark in pricing their rates, fell by 13.6 basis points or 6.801 percent. The 182-day rate also eased by 12.5 basis points to 7.727 percent. The 364-day bills inched 0.658 percent, or 11.4 basis points lower than the previous week's level.

The volume of bids reflected the huge appetite for the mutually risk-free government securities.

Traders for the three-month debt instrument reached P6.4 billion, making it oversubscribed by more than four times. Bids for the six-month and one-year debt paper amounted to P6.16 billion and P6.76 billion, respectively, reflecting a over-subscription of more than three times.

The government's debt offering for each of tenor was only P2 billion. The Treasury's auction committee raised to P10 the P6 billion it was scheduled to borrow yesterday.

Mendiola said banks were pleased with the government's fiscal data for the first quarter of the year. The government's budget deficit for the period reached only P63.5 billion, or 18 percent lower than the P77.8 billion official target.

The Treasury official said the credit market also took to cue from the strengthening peso, which closed Friday at 54.17 as a dollar, gaining 38 centavos from the previous day's 54.55.

The recent increase in the power rates charged by Manila Electric Co., also contributed to the positive reaction in the money, Mendiola said. He explained that higher rates would make the debt holders more assured power firm less dependent on the cash-strapped national government.

Mendiola said the positive sentiment of the credit market was

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• April 28 - 30, 2000: Shell Bastog Svc. Station, Session Ave., Cotabato City
• April 28 - May 1, 2000: Barasoain Church, Malolos, Bulacan
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Tweaks of the trade

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Bautista III

IT'S possible that even medical science cannot kill it, by a cruel stroke of fate, many of our public officials are born without the biological parts that allow people to think.

Still, down here in our boutique, the guys just know it as a fact of life. We have a lot of officials who have brains as big as mosquito bones...(for government, okay!)

That becomes obvious, I must agree, the moment you look at some of their decisions. Our good example is that plan of some bright guys in the bureau of customs.

It seems that, based on word going around at the piers, that the bureau will soon allow the importation of "powdered" drinks at the unbelievable duty of 5 percent.

What's more, that zero-zero import duty will likely stay for good! Can you believe that: 5 percent duty?

I don't know what trick of trade happened there, but the customs guys ought to well just give the importers the key to the national treasury plant.

* * *

THAT plan of some bright officials of the customs bureau, if it does not innocently in just an effort may convert our airports to become a custom of traders.

You know—no more manufacturing! Who cares, anyway, that factories require a lot more jobs than, say, a fish ball stand?

Note that most multinational companies have only name as do trading. But a few of them, as you know, already closed down their manufacturing facilities.

The latest one is the GI roller maker American Standard. As a bonus to its hand-to-mouth Filipino suppliers, the well-GI multinational just refused to pay any of them.

One fine day, anyway, for some of the huge profits they already made here, many of those multinationals decided to get rid of their 10-spinet-heavy workers.

They came up with the profitable idea to just import "finished goods"! From their own factories in the countries around us, and thus call the import of items here.

Of course, they also do not export anything from this country, which means that they are giving us invaluable help in squandering our fast-evanescent dollars.

* * *

ANYWAY, that latest plan of the customs bureau for that zero percent duty on "powdered" drinks, may have something to do with this famous US multinational called Kraft.

Kraft is the maker of the powdered drink called "Tang." For a lot of years, and a lot of income, millions upon millions of pesos, Kraft made the name "Tang" brand-here.

It so happened that our pro-breast offclads decided to kill our industries with huge tariff rate.

Those cuts were done in the name of "import liberalization," which was part of "globalization," encouraged US economists.

Kraft thus swapped shaking "Tang" here. Thanks to our zero tariff, it could import the product from its factories in the countries around us, and it could make more money.

As a concession to this country for the additional jobless people it created, Kraft told the customs bureau that it should pay that excessive 3 percent duty on imported "Tang."

Because medical science had no way of proving the size of their brains, anyway, some guys at the customs bureau agreed to the plan.

* * *

At a condition, the customs bureau required Kraft to just a bond. The money should be able to cover for an import duty on "Tang" at 40 percent.

Let me explain. That 40 percent has always been the "normal" import duty on powdered drinks. That's because all 40 percent has been the import duty on sugar.

Based on government rules, if more than 70 percent of the imported POWDERED product is sugar, it is considered sugar. You pay 60 percent, right?

When, according to Kraft, The US multinational insisted that "Tang," whatever its content, is a "finished product."

Never mind that the so-called powdered drinks, not to mention softdrinks, are really just a lot of sugar. Well, okay, with some water. Oh, and a little flavor!

Anyway, since the customs bureau and the US company Kraft could not agree on the duty on "Tang," they instead agreed on the usual with-radded "compromise."

For the meantime, Kraft would pay an import duty of 5 percent, but it should post a bond as if it were paying for 40 percent.

Should the time come when the customs bureau would decide, eventually, that the duty was actually only one percent, Kraft would get back the bond.

That time, from what I hear at the piers, is coming.

* * *

If the customs bureau indeed follows the sound advice of Kraft about the 1 percent import duty on powdered juice, the bureau will have to cough up some P600 million.

That's the value of the cash bond that importers posted, based on an import duty of 40 percent on powdered juice. The bureau will have to give back the bond.

And everybody thought that this financially challenged core administration of Gloriaveta would not hesitate in bill us with more taxes just to raise the revenues.

Even Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima already went on record that he would never increase our (already low tariffs, if only to raise funds for the core administration.

Now here comes the customs bureau, headed by somebody who has links with a US multinational company, not trying to give away P600 million. Tsss!Ge!

* * *

PSST: It is not that, though a little tweak of the trade rules, the customs bureau already found a way to justify the "finished product" argument of Kraft.

Who will happen? Well, for one, all the other factories of powdered juice here will also clear down.

They will also want to put up factories somewhere else, and just import the "finished goods."

This is already happening in the garment business. What's another industry gone wrong, right?

For the information of our bright public officials, the import duty on "pre-mixed" juice is 5 percent. The "pre-mixed" must be packed here. It is, in effect, just a raw material.

Thus, it is not covered by the amazing Kraft argument for 1 percent duty on the finished product.

And so, if the local factories must pay 5 percent for raw material, while the import to the Kraft gets only 1 percent for finished goods, do you think our officials are just plain stupid, or what?

* * *

AHEM, from the thousands of jobless people that the good-bye (and, of those powdered drinks that will be left behind, we may as well kill the sugar industry.

As I said, powdered drinks contain a lot of sugar. To serve the needs of their manufacturers here, our sugar industry invested a lot of money to retool its plants.

Sugar mills already invested in the equipment to make a special type of sugar called "granulated," which is used in making powdered juice.

Now, we have something like 29 sugar centrals, making raw sugar, plus some 13 refineries, making "granulated" sugar. All in all, the sugar industry is said to employ 400,000 jobs.

In the sugar farms, some 400,000 are working. Meaning, about two million individuals are dependent on the sugar farms.

Those are the guys who will be hurt by that 1 percent-height decision of the customs bureau.

I don't know how we will just let those people take up arms. To think, our bright officials already talking about the possibility of civil unrest in these hard times. Tell me about it.

Bacnotan acquires majority stake in Cagayan de Oro school

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

BACNOTAN Consolidated Industries Inc. (BCIC), the flagship company of the Hontra Group, said it has agreed to buy 50 percent of Cagayan de Oro College Inc. for P175.3 million, according to its disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

The acquisition was part of BCIC's plan to acquire a network of three to five colleges and universities with a total student population of 30,000 to 75,000, officials had said.

CDO College is a non-sectarian college put up in 1947 that offers degrees in criminology, education, computer science and engineering, among others.

CDO College was BCIC's latest acquisition after investing in Arouin University in Quezon and Cebu City.

All have 5,000 students and have recently undergone a P69-million upgrade of its facilities.

BCIC said it was also evaluating the possibility of investing in another school in Cebu.

The Philippine Investment Management, Inc. (Phinma) group is re-engineering its flagship firm, BCIC, into a services-oriented firm, encouraged by the prospects of the sector as a key driver of the economy in the future.

Aside from educational services, the Phinma Group has interests in steel, in power generation and oil exploration, in low cost housing development, and in financial services.

For the first quarter, BCIC reports to earn roughly P120 million from dividend payments from a subsidiary after the sale of the group's cement interest.

It also said that with the proceeds gained from the sale of its cement interests, BCIC was now debt free after it paid of P5.2 billion in loans and preferred shares.

BCIC recently unloaded its entire cement interest to Cemex Holdings, a subsidiary of Switzerland's Holcim Ltd., saying it would no longer stay competitive in the cement industry.

BCIC and unit Atlas Cement Corp. sold their combined 9.1 percent stake in Union Cement Holdings, a major shareholder of Union Cement.

The deal was valued at $214 million consisting of $89 million for the direct holdings of BCIC and $125 million for Atlas' shareholdings.

BCIC's strategy is to diversify its portfolio to businesses in the services sector, including education, energy, financial services and offshore banking.

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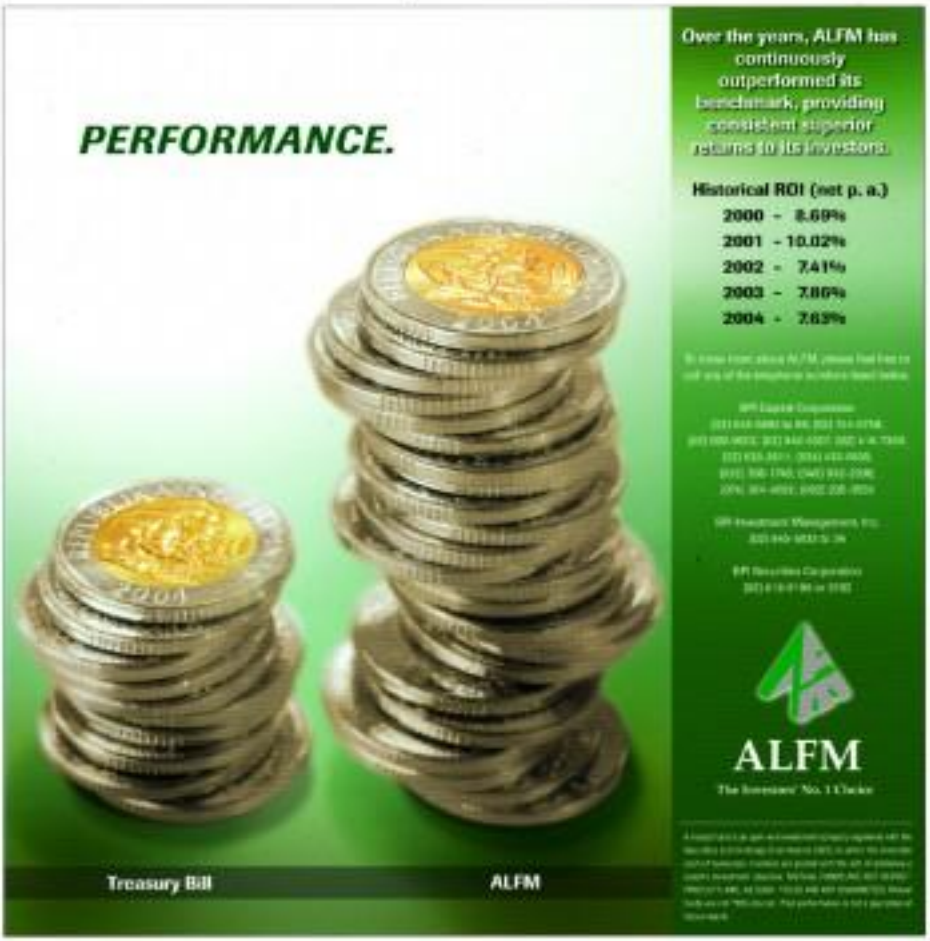
T-bill rates decline across the board

expected to continue today during the auction for the seven-year treasury bonds. "Considering the liquidity shown today by banks, I believe the (T-bond) auction will also be well received by the market," he said.

Mendiola said that while banks considered the power rate increase a positive development for the government's fiscal health, the rupiniss market over it as something that could accelerate inflation and therefore an part on corporate earnings



Mayday Mayday

MR. BEARBULL

Ken Narbuto

I AM happy to report that I do not have egg on my face in the result of telling everyone to SELL first thing last Tuesday. It sure indeed the bottom and those who followed my advice were rewarded. The Phisix rose steadily on Thursday and Wednesday, had a minor reaction on Thursday, then surged on Friday for a net gain of 97 points.

Honestly, I am delighted and wish that only, or mainly, would make unequivocal calls. Perhaps they are afraid of being wrong once, especially when they have been lucky to be right every time and it would certainly provide guidance to readers. Pitch the help of my degree of calls indicated, I have called 16 cycles, 8 Caps and 8 Bottoms, with evidence slowly accruing.

It so happens that my SELL signal 7 weeks ago coincided with my writing day and the index subsequently fell 177 points. My BUY) signal last week also occurred on my writing day so I am able to predict the top and the bottom on reference on both occasions. The self-satisfaction we all have when we are right is quite human it is a momentous indicator, admittedly a complex one.

Momentum does not measure the change in an index on a week, it measures the rate of change, which is quite a different matter. For example, if a stock moves from P5 to P6 in a month, then P6, P6 and P5 in equal intervals, an arithmetic chart would show a straight line but a semi-logarithmic chart would show that the rate of change was slowing down, in the first month, it rose 100 percent, in the second, 50 percent, the third by 33 percent and the fourth by 25 percent. So it is losing momentum.

If at the beginning of the following month, the stock only moved from P6 to P5.5, the arithmetic chart would show a sharp, but the momentum would have fallen sharply and gone warning of an imminent top. That is why trend lines and trend channels should be drawn on semi-log paper. Unfortunately, this is not very practical unless you have a computer.

Because it is comic, most technical analysts use lag indicators such as moving averages. If we, say using a 50-day moving average, this will tell you what you should have done a month ago. I see no merit in this, nor do I believe in Elliott Wave, as it has no mathematical foundation. There is no reasonable reason why a bull market should go up in 5 waves and go down in 3.

Although, I am pleased with the continuance of the bull move, it has taken me all the fun out of investing. I was watching the last day of the Masters when Tiger Woods blew a 5-stroke lead over Dymaxx. Iowa church on the TV (and some uncharitable thoughts) did not tell me that Tiger had won in a playoff on the first hole. I continued to watch but all the excitement was gone. That is how I feel now.

In the future, I will concentrate not on the cyclical but on various aspects of the local and international markets, particularly the US. It is either unfortunate that American tend to go from manic depression to euphoria, and back again, all in the space of a few days. A short while ago, both the DOW and the Nasdaq fell three hottest levels for the year, and there was a second short position, assuming that the majority of players were bearish.

Then ORTEL came out with excellent results and everything changed. Here we show the price of oil, inflation and the record balance of payments were forgotten and the DOW rallied over 200 points, its biggest gain in 2 years. The trading floor was littered with sunglasses, Valium and marijuana. How day, it was dawn again and the latest recipient of upside, upset, Pfizer, and Intuit.

The sad thing about this is that all readers, or most of the readers, follow the US, unlike the comment of its size and importance. In when it fell 400 points in one week, every Asian and European market followed suit, when it gained 200 points in one day, all markets ed. But will all markets agree and that is why I follow the US so closely. The Producer Price Index and the Consumer Price index were both considerably higher than expected, a sure sign that inflation is on the offing so the FED will continue raising rates at a measured pace. For the record, I expect a much higher number of jobs to be created in the month, manufacturing has recently, and that should give the market a fillip. The seemingly mixed info is however American idle.

There is no point speculating on the final version of the Oil Bills as we all know it soon, but I remain optimistic that the lawmakers will cooperate on the spirit of reduced taxation. If you include the government-owned companies such as Meralco, then anyone payable a 10% percent of EOE I predicted to my newsletter that Meralco would shortly receive an increase and a few days later, it was granted practically. This was absolutely unnecessary as their profits were enormous, but it is hardly and could be prevented. In this way, the government could recover a substantial amount of capital and reduce its liabilities.

Unfortunately, this will increase consumers' electricity bills to such an extent that wealth and power will be distributed, not by earning a BMW, a Mercedes or a yacht, but by the ability to run an air-conditioner.

I also wrote in the Inquirer Cross Out the government MUST give the primary drivers a P1 increase, and P500 to the rest the workers, if they would be called a subsidy rather as income. Cory Aquino says and the more significant work but it is because still a wage increase might be delayed to 1 an out of 1 the market ahead of May 1.

A strange thing happened about 10 days ago. On any given day, some foreign brokers buy SM while others sell. But on this particular day, all it be shows sold and 2 local brokers had to absorb 2 million shares as there was not selling of P6.75 million. About 4 hours later, consolidated sent Bull to the SEC against the company. What is inside information or did all 6 Fund Managers receive divine inspiration that morning? I do not think that the complaint is serious because a hoary court dismissed it but the asset-hungry until the Supreme Court makes its decision it will deter investors to the economic. SMPH looks cheaper.

Ayala is more likely to win control of Manulife Water because their DMC because of its genuine experience but investors have been selling Manila Water on fears that it will get delisted.

Turnover on Monday was incredibly low, particularly if you remove the cross sales on TEL, ALI and ITR. Foreign locations must

RP strategic paradigm on China and Taiwan

By Jose P. Leviste Jr.
Chairman, Philippine Business Academic Forum, Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) Corporate Network

(First of two parts)

HOW Manila will position itself diplomatically in the face of the continuing political rift between Beijing and Washington on Taiwan is a case in point that becomes even more relevant with the upcoming visit to Manila of Chinese President Hu Jintao.

The Philippines does not want to see the conflict escalate into something more serious, lest our economy will suffer. Moreover, since the Chinese mainland—China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao—is now the largest destination of Philippine exports.

The Philippines is in close geographical proximity to Taiwan that our municipal fishermen from the north share common fishing grounds with their large commercial fishing vessels. An outbreak of military hostilities between China and Taiwan, which remains a possibility at this point, would have thousands of Taiwanese boat people "migrating" into the Philippines.

So passionate is China about the Taiwan issue that the first statement it makes in the declaration of Sept. Republic XVI is that Taiwan should respect the One-China policy and break diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

Hottest growth engine

A China-Taiwan war, which would certainly impact the Philippine economy, is the last thing the global economy needs at present. If there is one country that has restored the global economy after the 9-11 incidents in the US, it is China. Over the past two decades, China has emerged as be the hottest growth engine in the world today.

The Chinese economy has been growing so fast, that the government had to intervene to prevent the economy from overheating. The Chinese government orchestrated a design for the soft landing of its economy so that it would just only reach 8-percent growth in 2005, a slowdown from its 9-10 percent annual gross domestic product (GDP) expansion in the past.

However, growth still reached 9.5 percent in the first quarter of 2005 despite the Chinese government's curbing of bank lending. The fear that the Philippines would maintain a 6.1-percent growth in 2004, the highest in 13 years, and forecasts show the "soft-landing" growth won't be sustained this year.

World's largest

With almost 1.3 billion people, China is striving to be the world's largest economy, with some analysts even predicting China could grab that "title" from the United States within the next 20 years. This, of course, is viewed with concern by the US and Japan, which both fear that China's increasing economic might may be accompanied by rising military ambition.

Aside from on the part of the world's two largest economies is not without basis at all, if one is to consider China's territorial claim over the South China Sea and its threat to assert its right over Taiwan.

China's impressive aerospace technology reminds the US of how it is ready to become a superpower with nuclear capability to target the east coast of the United States. The rising ambition and power among young Chinese who have been pinning for avowed reluctance on the invasion in Japanese history books that give too little attention to the atrocities committed by the Japanese imperial army against the people of China, Korea, the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries that of political assertiveness.

Dramatic rise

The Filipinos, of course, could relate to the heightened emotions of the Chinese over the issue of Japanese history books. History lovers exposed to the extensive evidence of the war between the US forces on one side and the Japanese military on the other.

After Japan surrendered to US nuclear capability, the two nations eventually became allies and at one time were in a fight race to be the richest nation on the planet. Now, both are trying to recapture the dominance of China.

The Chinese economy today with its GDP estimated at US$1.65 trillion in 2004, or 20 times the Philippines' US$80 billion, is really a giant spectacle in Asia.

Chinese economic performance speaks for itself. In 2004, China had gross international reserves of US$609 billion, or nearly 30 times the Philippines' US$16 billion, and drew US$61 billion in foreign direct investments (FDIs), compared to the miniscule US$57 million that flowed into our country last year.

China's population is more than 15 times the 84 million Filipinos, and its land area of 9.6 million square kilometers is more than 28 times larger than our 300,000 square kilometers.

Unquenchable appetite

Its unquenchable appetite for raw materials and crude oil has made it the world's third largest importer, after the US and Germany and, in the process, has reformed-comedy-driven oil prices to their historic high this year to the detriment of oil importing countries like the Philippines.

Decades of capital building and infrastructure development have led to rising household income in China, where 254 million people have been lifted out of extreme poverty over 12 years of sustained economic growth from 1990 to 2003.

In the booming city of Shanghai, millions of Chinese professionals and employees have been enticed into the magnet of consumerism, which is the lifeblood of the free-market economy. The launch of new high-rise buildings were built in Shanghai alone over the past few years. China accounts for half of the world's demand for cement today. (To be continued.)

RP seeks $5-B loan from China to finance mining, infra projects

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE PHILIPPINES is planning to ask $5 billion from the Chinese government to fund oil various infrastructure and mining projects in the country.

Ronnie Chua, president of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc., said that during a recent meeting between officials of the two countries, a Philippine Cabinet secretary informally raised the possibility of securing $5 billion in soft financing from the Chinese government.

"Secretary (Romulo) Neri proposed to a visiting Chinese official that a $5-billion fund package be arranged to help finance land infrastructure projects," Chua said.

The economic planning secretary said "it was just an idea being floated around."

Neri said no formal request had been made to the Chinese government, which already agreed to extend credit to new major railway projects.

China's Export-Import Bank has offered to help finance the $500-million Manila Clark-Subic Railway System at the bicameral, as well as the $1 billion rehabilitation of the Philippine National Railways.

"There are also projects in the mining sector," added Neri, on top of other infrastructure projects that have to be financed such as highways, airports and seaports.

Several Chinese companies have expressed interest to take part in local mining projects.

The financing for the railroad and Clark-SBMA would be in the form of official development assistance. The former administration secured the financial assistance during a state visit to China in September last year.

During the visit last year, China's Sinohydro and the Northrail administration signed the $389-million loan agreement. Funding for the PNR is still being finalized.

The improvement of the country's infrastructure, especially the mass transit systems, is part of the Macapagal administration's priority program although local business groups have cautioned the government against forging expensive deals.

The Federation of Filipino-Chinese businessmen said it would focus on investment opportunities in the countryside.

The group is embarking on an investment marketing program that will involve identifying opportunities all over the country.

The Filipino-Chinese group will also come up with a report to raised investment priority list for each province.

"The plan is to identify and make a list of all investment possibilities within six months," Chua said. "We are mobilizing 130 of our local chambers to find good investment opportunities in the provinces."

The local chambers of the federation will also identify tourist spots that can be promoted and developed.

Pacific Plans claims it met tuition obligations

PACIFIC Plans Inc. was able to pay in full all claims over the past 14 years, even though the company was not required to in case it was to pay the increasing tuition shared by the government's 1998 deregulation of school fees, a PPI official said in a statement.

"We tried everything to help our plan holders, although we would have easily hidden behind our contract which shields us from contributory obligations arising from a change in government rules or policy," PPI president Ernesto Cortes said.

Section 20 of the contract specifically frees PPI from liability to "... escalating from [natural calamities], government legislation or regulation ... that are beyond the control of Pacific, in connection with the implementation of its obligations under this agreement ..."

PPI in 1986 started selling open-ended educational plans, promising to pay to a scholar's course regardless of the amounts At that time, the government capped tuition increases by not more than 10 percent per year, allowing all pre-need companies to predict precisely how much they needed each year to meet obligations.

But in 1998, the cap on college and high school tuition increases was removed on condition that parents and students would be "consulted." Elementary schools followed in 1992.

By 1994, the government removed the last remaining restriction and allowed a free-for-all, thinking that giving schools more money would improve the quality of education.

In the following school year, 1995-96, Garcia said the schools, particularly those running need so "escalation," jacked up their tuition by as much as 30 percent. Her instance, a plan sold for only P16,200 in 1986 is now getting high school benefits totaling almost P500,000.

"There was no way Pacific Plans, or any company for that matter, could earn enough to cover those steady annual increases," Garcia said. "But we paid everybody, using our operating profits through those years."

For the company, he added, cannot do this indefinitely.

PPI early this month went to court to seek suspension of payment and rehabilitation. It said in cash was just enough to cover just the present enrollment period. There would be no more cash for the next one, the company said.

PPI is now negotiating with 8 natural institutions to build up liquidity. It will also offer plan holders the chance to cash in on their policies, at cost in the Makati court approves the company's rehabilitation plan.

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BUSINESS

UNDP: RP economy can grow by 5.3% in '05

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE domestic economy can expand by 5.3 percent this year, lifting the lower end of the government's economic growth target, according to a socioeconomic survey by the United Nations' regional development arm.

In its 2005 survey, the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) expected the country's economy to slow down from the 13-year high growth level of 6.1 percent achieved last year.

But the gross domestic product (GDP) growth outlook of 5.3 percent is the survey sees more optimistic than the forecasts made by multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank which, respectively, projected an expansion of only 4.7 percent and 5 percent for the year.

According to Escap's latest publication, "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2005: Dealing with Shocks," the forecast already assumed that the external environment shall become less favorable.

It added that a higher growth rate could be achieved if external demand is sustained.

The Escap report came out at the University of Asia and the Pacific yesterday.

The government is targeting a growth rate of 5.5-6.5 percent, but has conceded that expansion may fall only 5 percent as a consequence of skyrocketing oil prices.

The Escap survey expects Asian other emerging markets in Southeast Asia to outpace the Philippines' growth performance this year, with Indonesia seen growing by 5.5 percent, while Thailand and Malaysia, by 6 percent.

Next year, the Philippines is seen growing by 5.1 percent, as against its domestic's 5.7 percent, Malaysia's 6.1 percent and Thailand's 6.3 percent.

In 2004, the publication said the country's growth was sustained by strong external demand and domestic spending. Although investment was revived, spending on durable equipment slowed. The investment ratio remains comparatively low in the country.

But the publication said poverty alleviation remained the overriding socioeconomic concern in the Philippines.

"The task of reducing poverty in the Philippines is hampered by economic growth that has failed to generate enough jobs for the growing labor force," the Escap publication said.

"To generate more jobs, the Philippines' deeply needs more pro-poor growth but both consumer and investor confidence have been falling, in part owing to the pathos story of public finances, political instability, corruption and poor infrastructure."

High debt service cost, the publication added, had prevented higher budgetary allocation for much-needed improvements in infrastructure and social services.

While growth is not expected to be in open creation as in 2004, the survey predicted that "the Asia-Pacific would continue to be the fastest growing region in the world, with developing economies seen growing by an average of 6.2 percent this year.

Corporate taxation plan dropped

By Michelle V. Baron

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance has dropped the proposed Simplified Net Income Tax System (SNITS) for corporate taxpayers.

A Finance official said that "there was a policy shift in the DOF on the issue of plugging tax holidays and improving revenue collection from corporate taxpayers.

Instead of reducing allowable deductions, the DOF now believes that the Bureau of Internal Revenue should simply improve its collection efficiency so corporate taxpayers do not abuse the income tax system by claiming false allowable deductions.

The proposed SNITS for corporate taxpayers was also dropped because of conflict with the Senate-backed proposal to hike corporate income tax rate from 32% to 35 percent.

The plan was one of the original revenue-raising measures set by the Arroyo administration to combat the fiscal problem, estimated to bring in P40 billion in additional annual revenues.

Under the SNITS, the income tax rate of corporate taxpayers will be reduced from 32 to 10 percent, but allowable deductions from their gross earnings in determining their taxable income will be slashed.

The DOF earlier pushed for SNITS, saying it was the appropriate response to the suspected huge revenue losses due to unscrupulous claims of allowable deductions by companies.

The DOF said companies belonging to the large taxpayers' sector were resulting in average income tax equivalent to only 2.16 percent of their gross income, while the ideal should be around 10 percent.

The scant revenue collection from large taxpayers was allegedly due to their practice of claiming too much allowable deductions.

RP to extend China trade restrictions

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PEOPLE'S Republic of China has granted the request of the Philippine government to extend the country's quantitative restrictions (QR) on rice imports. The Department of Agriculture yesterday said.

The DA said, however, that in exchange for the country's QR extension, the Philippines has pledged to provide China with a country-specific quota of 22,000 metric tons of rice a year.

China is one of the country's traditional sources of rice. The other two are Vietnam and Thailand.

China and eight other countries were among the other WTO member countries that opposed the country's bid to extend the quantitative restrictions on rice imports.

Others include Argentina, Australia, Guinea, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Thailand and the United States (United States).

The initial round of discussions for the memorandum of understanding with China started in June last year. After three rounds of meetings, China agreed to the request of the Philippines for a seven-year QR extension, or until 2012.

The Philippines will also increase its minimum market access volume or rice to 350,000 metric tons from 239,000 metric tons beginning this June, and maintain that level until the extension ends in 2012.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap yesterday said in a statement that the support of the Chinese Government for the Philippine rice sector is crucial to strengthening the domestic rice industry. It also provides the Philippines with enough time to be self-sufficient in rice.

The signing of the MOU supporting the Philippine request for the extension of quantitative restrictions for rice will be among the highlights of the official visit to the country this week of China President Hu Jintao.

LIFESTYLE

Have courage to face life

"The greatest threat to life and health is having nothing to live for."
—Deepak Chopra, M.D.

NO matter how you look at it, stress is a major problem. A key factor in preventing its damaging effects is your response to it.

Adaptability

Harvard psychologist George Vaillant proved this more than 50 years ago when he monitored the health of 285 men for 40 years. His discovery: A person who appeared healthy at youth, mental and physical maturity was most likely the predecessor of a sick if he responded poorly to stress.

"Of the men who had the best mental health, only two became chronically ill or died by age 50. Of the 40 men with the poorest mental health, however—18, almost 10 times as many—were chronically ill or dead by that age."

The body is a storehouse of energy. The energy gets drained when hopelessness sets in, when the desire for life is gone.

Adaptability questionnaire

If you want to understand yourself better, try this test.

Assign points:

almost never applies—0 points
sometimes applies—1 point
usually applies—2 points
almost always applies—3 points

1. When I am first confronted with a problem and have no idea how it can be solved, I take the attitude that the right answer will emerge.

2. Events in my life happen with their own rightful timing.

3. I am optimistic about my future.

4. When someone rejects me, I am hurt, but I accept that the decision was theirs to make.

5. I feel the loss of family and friends who died, but the grief resolves itself and I move on. I don't try to bring back what cannot be brought back.

6. I feel committed to ideals larger than myself.

7. When arguing with someone, I defend my position, but I also find it easy to acknowledge the rightness in the other side.

8. I seize the present, not the past.

9. I donate time to worthwhile causes, even if they are unpopular.

10. I am considered a good listener. I don't interrupt others when they talk.

11. If someone has a lot of emotion at stake in something, I hear them out without expressing my views.

12. Given a choice between a high-salaried job that is fairly boring and a job I like doing at half the pay, I'll take the job I love.

13. My style of managing other people is to allow them to do what they want rather than try to control them. I interfere as little as possible.

14. I find it easy to trust others.

15. I am not prone to worry. The ups and downs of difficult situations affect me less than most other people.

16. In competitive situations, I am a good loser. I tell me "Good game," but "I'll watch it the next."

17. Being right in every situation isn't all that important to me.

18. I feel comfortable playing with young children. I enjoy their world easily.

19. I don't think about my mistakes very much.

20. I can easily feel what someone else is feeling.

INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

21. Quiet people make me feel comfortable. Nervous people don't make me nervous.

Total score:
Evaluating your score:

50 points or over: You are responsibly adaptable and has spent a long time on personal growth. Others seek your for good sense and advice. You give high priority to your ability to remain comfortable under pressure and readily accept new challenges. You pride yourself in being able to resolve conflicts well.

30-49 points: You are reasonably adaptable to everyday challenges, but the amount of work you have put into this area has probably been limited. You are the kind of person that others consider easygoing, but you are likely to have more anxieties and regrets that you haven't faced up to. Conflicts upset you, and you tend to fall under the influence of people with stronger opinions.

20-28 points: You have definite ideas of right and wrong behavior, and put a high priority on defending your points of view. Personal growth has not been high on your priorities so far. You are likely to be well organized and decidedly goal-oriented. If you find yourself in a situation of conflict or competition, you really want to be on the winning side.

Under 20 points: Your sense of self needs considerable work. Dominated by one or both parents as a child, you fear rejection and become upset or critical when others disagree with you. You have your way of doing things and do not like surprises. You are likely to be extremely orderly, with lots of hidden worry, or else very disorganized, reacting strongly to one external event after another.

This test does not aim to make you think less or more of yourself but to stimulate you to a desire to see growth.

Keeping the faith

The glorious life, it is said, is only reserved for those who value every moment on earth. But the glorious life requires you to have the courage to face life's challenges no matter how painful, including the pain of powerlessness and feeling unloved and unlovable.

Gary Zukav, in "The Heart of the Soul," says "your painful emotions tell you what needs to be changed in you, not in other people." Stressful situations call attention to your strengths or weakness. You can triumph or fail.

The basis of glory is faith, the best medicine for fear. Faith declares: "Life is good. God is good. I am good."

Affirm life now so that life will affirm you.

Life drink

Take a full glass of water in small, slow sips each time you feel stressed. Sit back, relax. Breathe slowly but deeply with each sip.

Chill-out splash

When faced with powerful depressing thoughts and feelings, take a mild shower or splash cool water on your face and around your neck.

Love and light!

Accept challenges no matter how difficult, including feeling powerless and being unloved and unlovable

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IQ alert system that gives only pure water or no water	✔	?
Tested in over 100 laboratories against every	✔	?
No chemicals are used for purification	✔	?
Purification in front of your eyes	✔	?
24 hour instant supply	✔	?
Maintenance under your control and supervision	✔	?
Take as much as you need for good health, just it is always	✔	?
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THE WIVES. Elena Apostol, Rosie Chong, Maria Fajardo and Zenny Fernando. Standing: Rachel Villanueva, Ruby Valenzuela, Ophie Media, Queenie Milo and the hostess of the luau, Betsy Tanchanco

CUSTOMS collector Tom Agustin, Sid Reyes, Gerry Contreras, Manny Estacion, Chiara Luciano, Mats Santiago and Jake Bautista

MANG Soriano, former hostess of Duty Free Philippines, with Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank VP Manny Estacion and Mac-Mason Phils. president Rimbo Milo

Red lions roar and purr

TRIO SAN MIGUEL roaring lions had a bash of a time at their weeklong reunion, with a carnival of high school Class '62 flashbacks (hotlines from the windy city of Chicago, my favorite city New York, California, Oregon and even cold Canada, together with local former classmates, pulong-pulong, etc.

It all started at the classic Forbes grade-mate reunion of renowned architect par excellence and party-giver Jimmy Gandionco, no less. The 110 '62 gang, with their wives, learned many fascinating facts about professionals. Not to be outdone, Ismael and FLOTT's head honcho, brilliant hotelier Manny Pangilinan, as in "MVP" honcho his former classmates with a cocktail soiree at a premier watering hole at Star Base Apvie, he hosted the group at the chic Red and White Bar at the MIC Two.

Next day the gang was at the Gamboa-Sto. Tomas' of Kings super pad, Malo Santiago, who entered the literati artistic and novelle realm after being the commissioner that he is, darlings.

But the highlight of the trip was a bit-week

HOT! Ian Manny V. Pangilinan hosted his pals at Bar Three.

LABOR leader Bobby Cruz

FRANK Sagui and royal ensemble-ites Jaey Veneracion

CUPID HITS EGGS'S EYE: Super-rare PR on the block Chino Trinidad and GF Reyes

GALS IN THE SCENE: Pete Chua and Mitch Chapitos

TURNING HEADS: Cel Jose, Carlos Quintinitenza and Cowboy Santos...all Wrangler models

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Interview Arcanche

Photos by Alex Van Stagren using Kodak EasyShare

and rest to Subic, courtesy of low-key magnate businessman Bob Tanchanco, but who else.

The Bedana and their sisters were treated to a treasure Filipino lunch buffet at Bob's awesome forested mountain place. A grand tour of the bar area (or American men) soon followed. The day was capped by a colorful Hawaiian luau, with Polynesian dancers, watch, or fruits and roses, cured garden.

The sub-rub gang of '62 sang their favorite songs from days gone by with the Philippines' very own "Suy Clarke," Andrew Jubagat of Iloilo Yacht Club.

The next day, Chichan Lumimio, Clark-based, eminent chief executive officer, threw a grand luncheon-cum-harvest-moonlight fandango.

Back in Manila, the '65 '62 bunch had a retarding up party a dinner dance at the mega-sun of this world' gorgeous penthouse of the host with the most, Gerry Contreras, at Green Plaza in Antonio Village, Makati. Here it was cold beer that overflowed, courtesy of San Miguel Packaging president Jhet Villa-Abrille.

Back to the jungle, surrounding Subic class-mates—treasurer ringed Jaime Gomez and former Speaker Neil Sacaniotello, plus all the other lost lions...agreed that it took a roaring Red Lion to survive the asphalt jungle out there.

What a great week and a total package of fun to remember...pulong-pulong.

100 divine years

"Yes, you're never alone a long way buddy. That renowned brand Wrangler celebrated 100 years of denim history with the Rich Blended Collection Party...pulong-pulong, held at the M Cafe of the Manila Museum in Greenbelt. Our tweets top party animals celebrated the centennial in real cowchlorate gear.

Already a tremendous hit in Europe as well as Sup Tokyo, a special selection from the vintage, limited edition Wrangler Blended Collection, was flown in for this happening and presented in select guard mini shows hosted by pretty-pretty Erika Mitz during the dressed down but ultra-sophisticated evening.

After the show, it was cocktail time, with Goodfish and petite designer-cum-singer Rain Torralba providing music and entertainment, pulong-pulong.

THE WINNING TEAM: Mega winner Caroline Sanchez with Wrangler's brand manager Gin Lopez and Jeel Ong, winner of a Wrangler vintage piece

WRANGLER'S fashion thing and Big Fish's Donnie Princess

LIKE VEGAS-based Bunny Arrollo, Chicago-based Fred Tsai and host Bob Tanchanco

FEARLESS Ombudsman Lot Gonzalez and mega-architect Gerry Contreras

SAN MIGUELS Bun Villa-Abrille and UP professor and management guru Boni Azurin

BENNY dela Cruz, Bunny Arrollo and Jun Dalton, with their mega boss Bob Tanchanco. Standing: Willie Luong, Danny Chong and Manny Estacion

STRACK

Psychic unaware of her 'gifts'

A WORRIED housewife we shall call Maria Rosa related matter-of-fact psychic experiences since she was a child. She would want to know what to make of these experiences.

Here's a summary of her story unless unnecessary:

Seeing ghosts and other invisible creatures

At 8 years old, she would see ghosts but thought they were real people because they appeared real. "I saw them everywhere, in my house, in school, in the cemetery and even in the mall," she said. "I also saw hours moving under my grandmother bed."

In high school, at the waterfront a prime, "I saw the dead person in the coffin but he was colored green. I think he died of stomach cancer."

On her graduation, her grandmother died and was buried in the same cemetery as the priest. She wished her grandma's grave close, but every time she was there she felt somebody breathing down her neck.

One day she woke up at 3 a.m. to take her barking dog for a walk. When she went back to bed she heard the toilet flush, though she knows everybody was asleep. She called her parents about it, but they did not believe her.

The following day, her dog woke her up as usual. When she went back to bed, she was pushed from behind. She glanced at the clock and saw in her mind's eye a person in white. When told, her parents said she watched too many horror films.

When the manifestations continued, she asked her parents to have a priest bless the house, especially the toilet. But the "man" was still there though he could not approach her because she always had a rosary.

Then she met a religious minister with psychic powers, who told her what was happening had something to do with what she saw in the cemetery. Her father and brother were in the cemetery

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licanco

and, while praying, a green man in white appeared on the mall. It was the priest she once buried.

Maria Rosa, your experiences clearly indicate you are clairvoyant. You're called Third Eye is fully open that's why you see ghosts as if they are underlying human beings. Being also a medium, you interact spirits. They can tell if a person is a channel because of a special light emanating from him/her.

Ordinary blessings by priests will not get rid of multifaceted spirits in psychic wounds. But if the priest is clairvoyant, able to see and talk to disembodying entities, then he can be very effective.

Seeing events before they happen

"I met the EDSA revolution when I was still in college," said Maria Rosa. "I saw the car bombs in Baguio with lots of kids crying. I could feel and hear screams when disasters were going to happen, as if they were happening at that moment. Unfortunately, I could not tell when the events would occur.

"I felt an emotional pain before my ex-boyfriend left me. I saw the aura of my new boyfriend when I used you to him. He became my husband.

"I saw my daughter fall 15 minutes before it happened. It exactly the same manner I saw it.

"I told my niece her former boyfriend was engaged to another girl when he did not know, but he couldn't do anything about it. It was a 'unrequited' marriage. He decided to take the other woman rather than my niece. I also told her he would get married in three months' time." Everything happened as Maria Rosa predicted.

She also told her niece another man was really in love with her. He was wearing a white shirt with buttons on the side and was in the medical profession. She saw him looking out an airplane window.

Maria Rosa told her niece to grab him as he was really good. Her niece was amazed, considering flying class options was confined counting her by regularly visited the doctor in Japan.

Maria Rosa also dreams three times of her father in a coffin months before he died.

The psychic ability involved in becoming the future is called "precognition," which literally means "to know before." It is clear you have strong precognitive abilities, too.

You are lucky to have these psychic powers, but I also realize they can sometimes be a burden. So you want to see doctor or psychiatrist wondering family members. But this ability is part of your personality and you have to accept it. What you can do is develop this part of you that you have been ignoring for so long.

Do not be bothered by what other people may say. Some misinformed people may consider you weird, but if you do not display or flaunt your powers, you will be all right. You can even help people.

Read my books on the subject and accept seminars to understand the science better. Yes, it is a science, with its own principles, methods and rules.

Many men and women have the same psychic experiences. You are not alone.

Address letters to this column at *Prince Plaza I, 816 Jupiter St., Cembo Village, Makati City. Call 4267243 or 8926606 for information on seminars I conduct. E-mail jlicanco@pldtadsl.com.ph or visit http://www.jlicanco.skyrer.com. Listen to my DZRH radio program 7:45 p.m. every Sunday.*

Magazine 'reveals' the truth about pleasure

WHAT really pleases people is a prime mandate, according to Bathfeel Mr. Gorman's article on the Pleasure Principle featured in the "Publisher's Page" of the March/April issue of Healthy Options News Digest.

The publication offers health tips, facts, and information to help you maximize a healthy lifestyle.

It is offered free to customers of Healthy Options, the natural products store with branches located at Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Robinsons Galleria, Greenhills Supermarket, Rustan's Supermarket, Rustan's Makati, 2/L of Rustan's Supermall, Filinvest, Alabang, ground level of Ayala Center, Cebu City; ground floor of SM City North Edsa, 2/L of SM Manila and SM Pampanga; Greenbelt, Ayala Center, Makati City; 2/L of SM Megamall 3, Edsa Mandaluyong City.

For more information, visit their website at www.healthyoptions.com.ph.

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Incline crunch on stability ball

STRUCTURE: abdominal muscles

Equipment:
Stability ball
Exercise mat

Exercise technique:

1. Start by sitting on the ball with your legs hip width apart.
2. Slowly lower yourself into an (incline) position by walking your feet forward while you simultaneously roll your hips backward.
3. Once the ball is behind your lower back, place your hands behind your head. This is the starting position.
4. Curl your upper body bringing the bottom of your ribcage toward the top of your hipbones.
5. Return to the starting position.

Performance tips:
1. Exhale as you curl up; inhale as you return.
2. Tilt your pelvis (not it toward your ribcage) when you perform the incline crunch.
3. Place your fingers lightly on the sides of your head.

Repetitions:
12-15 repetitions

Dying to be thin

Promotional Feature

years. An irreversible side effect is loss of bone density that can cause osteoporosis or brittle bones.

Research has found that anorexics and bulimics have brain chemistry irregularities, but it cannot yet be determined if this is cause or effect of the disorders. But one does not become anorexic or bulimic overnight. The problem usually starts during the teenage years.

Examples of disordered or dysfunctional eating are the use of laxatives, diuretics or vomiting techniques, crash dieting, skipping meals, forcing and obsessive-adverse exercising or its counterpart, its susceptible people, disordered eating can become an eating disorder.

We are all born with a specific body type and structure. Trying to be skinny when we are naturally more voluptuous can only lead to frustration and damage to health. We need to accept, respect and celebrate our unique body type.

* * *

The Mercy Philippine Team will hold an orientation mall tour on April 27, 4 p.m., at SM North Edsa, and April 28, 4 p.m., at SM City Manila. For free demos in your gym, call 911-91-31/256.

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Dying to be thin

WELL AND GOOD
Tina Jocson

TRIGGERING disorders such as eating disorders, with food as the substance of abuse, have been called "suicide in slow motion." They can cause serious physical and psychological problems and even lead to death.

Anorexia or "voluntary starvation" has the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses according to Canada's National Eating Disorder Information Centre. It kills 12 times more adolescent girls than all other causes combined.

Severe deaths are attributed to bulimia or "binge-and-purge behavior" even though it is more common than anorexia. But it can be just as lethal. Terri Schiavo, who was in the center of a recent right-to-die controversy in the United States, had cardiac arrest due to bulimia-induced hypokalemia or abnormally low levels of potassium in the blood.

Abuse of exercise (multivitamin tonic overdrug, slimming tea, laxatives and diuretics (products that increase urine production) can cause electrolyte imbalance and cardiac arrest.

It's a pity that in the Schiavo case, covering the message that bulimia could kill was lost.

One lesson to be learned from it was bulimia could be deceiving. She was not thin when she went into coma for seven. Relatives can look perfectly healthy even though they are throwing up many times a day or taking 50-150 laxatives daily.

Unlike anorexics, bulimics are usually of normal weight or just slightly underweight so tend cases do not suspect anything is wrong. Even if they find the eating/purging strange, they may think it is not dangerous just like Schiavo's husband and friends.

Psychologist Doug Bunnell, president of the National Eating Disorders Association, told the Associated Press that the image of someone with an eating disorder as an emaciated woman was not the reality. "They don't get down that low. The face of eating disorders is your next-door neighbor's daughter or maybe your own."

Here are two famous eating disorder deaths and the lessons to be learned from them.

Christy Henrich

As one team, Henrich was the third-ranking female gymnast in the '91 Lifer among women athletes, a gold medal was her main goal. But battle with anorexia and bulimia began in 1988 when a judge told her to lose weight to improve her performance and qualify for the US Olympic team. Henrich weighed only 90 pounds then.

She died in 1994 at the age of 22 from multiple organ failure. Though she weighed 86 pounds then, at one point she only reached 47 pounds.

Research prompted by her led to the discovery of the "female athlete triad," a condition were interrelated symptoms of disordered eating, loss of menstrual cycle and reduced bone density.

Other researches latter then said, "Eating disorders among female athletes are among the most serious problems facing this population and portends. On the contrary, of anabolic steroid use in male athletes."

Olympic Rights, 1972 Olympic gymnast, survived her fight with anorexia and bulimia but she suffered two cardiac arrests. Other Olympic gymnasts who admitted having eating disorders were Kelly Johnson and Nadia Comaneci.

Lessons

Athletes with eating disorders are in double jeopardy of sudden death from cardiac arrest because, aside from depriving their bodies of much-needed nutrients, they also train hard. This can lead to electrolyte imbalances, and cardiac arrhythmias (deviations from the normal rhythm). Experts warn that non-athletes who diet severely and exercise excessively can also be in danger.

Anybody who considers and gets impatient for their performance or self-assessment of their current needs to be aware of the risk of developing unhealthy eating or exercise patterns. Coaches, trainers, fashion and television mentors should also watch what they say and the pressure they exert on their athletes to lose weight.

Words are powerful. People do not realize the psychological damage they may be causing when they tell a teenage girl or boy that s/he is fat, plump or chubby.

Karen Carpenter

Karen Carpenter was the first celebrity to die of anorexia and bulimia. Her death was the catalyst for true public awareness of eating disorders.

A chubby teenager, she started dieting at 16, lost 20 pounds and became obsessed with losing more. When she collapsed on stage in 1975, she weighed only 80 pounds.

Though carpenter sought professional help, the damage had already been done leading to her sudden death at 32 in 1983. Her death was weakened by years of self-inflicted abuse.

Lessons. The physical effects of eating disorders can haunt you for

(MORE C.)

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POWERED BY DIGIC

New drug controls hepatitis B better

A NEW hepatitis B treatment may make daily and lifelong medications no longer necessary.

Results of studies on the use of the treatment were presented during the 14th International conference of the Asian Pacific Association for the Study of the Liver.

Peginterferon alfa 2-A has been shown to treat both HbeAg-positive and HbeAg-negative chronic hepatitis B. It was seen the need for daily and potentially lifelong therapy for the disease.

Studies presented during the conference showed that the drug was superior to other was currently the most commonly prescribed medication for hepatitis B.

The new drug's medication maintained the treatment results and inhibited virus replication.

Chronic hepatitis B is a major global health problem, affecting more than 350 million people. It is one of the causes of liver failure, cirrhosis and liver cancer. Between one-quarter and one-third of people with chronic hepatitis B will develop progressive liver diseases. About one million annually die from liver disease making it the 10th leading cause of death worldwide.

Meanwhile, the First International Conference on the Management of Patients with Viral Hepatitis held in Paris recently was informed that hepatitis B could now be brought under control and the public could actually be cured.

Some 350 million people are infected with the hepatitis C virus across the globe. Hepatitis C is the cause of 60 percent of primary liver cancers and the number one cause of liver transplants in the world.

Prof. Patrick Marcellin said about one-third of the world's population was infected with Hepatitis B and 350 million people were chronic carriers of the virus and had the potential to transmit it.

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